



# The Practice of Reading the Bible

## *Experiences of Bible Reading*

Can you hear God speaking to you? God speaks to us all the time and we all have the opportunity to listen, but can you hear God's voice? There are many ways to hear God's voice, but we hear God speaking in a very distinctive and remarkably clear way by listening to God's word in the Bible. The Bible is a privileged book above all other books, and it gives us a special opportunity to hear God speak. As Eugene Peterson says, "Christians feed on Scripture. Holy Scripture nurtures the holy community as food nurtures the human body. Christians don't simply learn or study or use Scripture; we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water, missions into all the world, healing and evangelism and justice in Jesus' name, hands raised in adoration of the Father, feet washed in company with the Son." (Eugene Peterson, *Eat this Book*)

The *Practice of Reading the Bible* is a collection of 18 Bible activities that can be utilized in a variety of settings and combined into a variety of program models including the following:

- Intergenerational programs
- Family-centered programs
- Families at home activities (print or digital)
- Children's programming: classes, vacation Bible school, parent-child, grandparent-child
- Adolescent programming: classes, youth gatherings, and retreats
- Adult programming: independent, small groups, retreats, and large gathering settings
- Social media posts on Facebook and Instagram using the activities
- Online playlists of Bible experiences for different age groups published on a website
- Newsletters
- A "Guide to Reading the Bible" booklet (digital and print)
- And much more

## Reading the Bible Activities

The 18 Bible activities include a teaching plan and the activity. All of the activities are included on separate MS Word document so that you can create handouts for sessions, a booklet, online playlists and activities, social media posts, etc. Each Activity can be done in 20 minutes (approximately).

- Activity 1. What's Your Experience of the Bible?
- Activity 2. The Bible in Our Lives
- Activity 3. Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind
- Activity 4. Reading the Bible by Hearing and Obeying
- Activity 5. Reading the Bible by Hearing with Hopefulness
- Activity 6. Reading the Bible and Acting on What We Hear
- Activity 7. Playing the Bible Name Game
- Activity 8. Bible Search Game
- Activity 9. Reading a Biblical Text
- Activity 10. A Bible Reading Method
- Activity 11. 100 Essential Bible Readings in 100 Days
- Activity 12. Studying a Bible Text
- Activity 13. Reading the Bible with Heart
- Activity 14. Reflective Bible Reading
- Activity 15. Praying with the Psalms
- Activity 16. Lectio Divina
- Activity 17. Visio Divina
- Activity 18. Visual Faith Bible Activity (separate PDF file)

## Children Activities

There are 5 pages of reading the Bible activities designed for children that can be combined with other Bible activities or used as part of a children's program and home activities. (They are available online as a separate PDF file.)

1. Reading the Bible in My Family
2. Jesus Reads the Bible
3. Reading the Bible
4. Try It – Reading the Bible
5. Try It – Reading Gospel Stories

## A Learning Process for Christian Practices

The dynamic of forming people of all ages in a Christian practice incorporates four movements, which become the template for designing Christian practices learning programs.

### Movement 1. Reflecting on Our Lives

The first movement, *Reflecting*, taps into a basic area of human need that can find meaning and purpose in a Christian practice. Reflecting gives people an opportunity to become aware of how they experience a basic human need and hunger for the Christian practice in their own life. Reflecting also provides space for people to become aware of how they already engage in this practice, and the things that distort or hinder the practice.

Oftentimes this first movement begins with real-life stories (presentations, print, audio, and/or video) of people who seek meaning and purpose for their lives through a particular practice. This helps spark people's reflection and storytelling.

## Movement 2. Exploring the Christian Practice

The second movement, *Exploring*, grounds the Christian practice in the Bible by describing how the biblical story deepens our understanding of the Christian practice and connects to people's human needs and hungers. We present the wisdom of the Christian tradition on a particular Christian practice, describing what people today, and throughout history, actually do when they are engaged well in a particular practice—how people or communities live the practice with exceptional grace and skill. By connecting the Christian practice to human needs and hungers, people can identify how and why a practice is important to living a meaningful life.

## Movement 3. Experiencing the Christian Practice

The third movement, *Experiencing*, immerses people in the actual practice—opportunities to experience activities that lead them into the Christian practice. This immersion can take place in programs, within the life of the Christian community (such as worship and ministry activities), and/or out in the community (serving people, providing hospitality, etc.). The key is that people actually experience the practice.

## Movement 4. Living the Practice

The fourth movement, *Living*, includes reflecting on the experience of the practice activities (Movement 3); showing people how to make the Christian practice a part of everyday life; and providing people with a variety of tools and activities to integrate the Christian practice into their daily life—at home, at work, at school, and in the world.

## The Practice of Reading the Bible Learning Process

To illustrate how these four elements are incorporated into the learning process here is an example for the Practice of Reading the Bible. (The Reading the Bible Learning Program and reproducible activities are available for free on the Lifelong Faith website.)

Activity 1. What's Your Experience of the Bible?

Activity 2. The Bible in Our Lives

Activity 3. Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind

Activity 4. Reading the Bible by Hearing and Obeying

Activity 5. Reading the Bible by Hearing with Hopefulness

Activity 6. Reading the Bible and Acting on What We Hear

- Activity 7. Playing the Bible Name Game
- Activity 8. Bible Search Game
- Activity 9. Reading a Biblical Text
- Activity 10. A Bible Reading Method
- Activity 11. 100 Essential Bible Readings in 100 Days
- Activity 12. Studying a Bible Text
- Activity 13. Reading the Bible with Heart
- Activity 14. Reflective Bible Reading
- Activity 15. Praying with the Psalms
- Activity 16. Lectio Divina
- Activity 17. Visio Divina
- Activity 18. Visual Faith Bible Activity (separate PDF file)

## Movement 1. Reflecting on Life Experience

### Activities

- Activity 1. What's Your Experience of the Bible?
- Activity 2. The Bible in Our Lives

## Movement 2. Exploring the Christian Practice

### Activities

- Activity 3. Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind
- Activity 4. Reading the Bible by Hearing and Obeying
- Activity 5. Reading the Bible by Hearing with Hopefulness
- Activity 6. Reading the Bible and Acting on What We Hear

## Movement 3. Experiencing the Christian Practice

There are at least two ways to structure the learning design to give people direct experiences of Reading the Bible through the activities: a *guided experience* and *experience centers*.

*Approach 1. Guided Experience with the Whole Group.* Guide the participants in small groups or family groupings through the selected activities with a mix of presentation and direct experience.

*Approach 2. Experience Centers.* Offer an experience center for each activity you select. Have the participants move from station to station to experience the activities, similar to attending workshops at a conference. Each learning activity should have its own room or section of a large room. If you want everyone to experience all of the learning activities, then organize the participants into the same number of groups as you have learning stations. Make the groups of equal size and have them rotate from learning station to learning station.

## Activities

(Select activities to fit your program design. Each takes about 20 minutes to experience.)

- Activity 8. Bible Search Game
- Activity 9. Reading a Biblical Text
- Activity 10. A Bible Reading Method
- Activity 11. 100 Essential Bible Readings in 100 Days
- Activity 12. Studying a Bible Text
- Activity 13. Reading the Bible with Heart
- Activity 14. Reflective Bible Reading
- Activity 15. Praying with the Psalms
- Activity 16. Lectio Divina
- Activity 17. Visio Divina
- Activity 18. Visual Faith Bible Activity (separate PDF file)

## Movement 4. Living the Practice

### Reflecting on the Reading the Bible Experiences

Use questions like the following to help people reflect on their experience of the Reading the Bible.

- Which Reading the Bible Activities did you like best? Why?
- Which ones did you like least? Why?
- How did you feel God's presence through these Bible experiences?
- Which Reading the Bible activities do you (or your household) want to start using?

Guide people in integrating the Reading the Bible activities into their daily life.

- Which Bible reading activity(s) do you (or your household) want to include in your life?
- When will you (or your household) make time for Bible reading in your day or week (upon rising, before bedtime, mealtime—breakfast or dinner, etc.)?
- Where will you (or your household) read the Bible (at the table, in the car, outdoors, quiet room in the house, etc.)?

### Developing a Bible Reading Action Plan

Guide people in developing a Bible reading plan using Bible reading activities they would like to adopt to strengthen their practice of reading the Bible.

1. Decide on two or three Bible reading ideas you or your family/household can put into action.
2. Take each Bible reading activity and write a script for how you will live the activity in your life or family/household: where, when, how, etc.
3. Identify roadblocks that you might encounter and think about how you will overcome them.
4. Commit to a date when you will start practicing each new idea.

# Program Designs

The Christian practices learning process and activities can be used in a variety of program designs:

- Intergenerational programs
- Family-centered programs
- Families at home activities (print or digital)
- Children’s programming: classes, vacation Bible school, parent-child, grandparent-child
- Adolescent programming: classes, youth gatherings, and retreats
- Adult programming: independent, small groups, retreats, and large gathering settings
- Online playlists of Reading the Bible experiences for different age groups published on a website

Here are four examples of program designs for the Practice of Reading the Bible.

## One-Session Program (Guided Experience)

The four movements and activities can be used to design a one-session program of 60-90 minutes for children, youth, adults, and/or parents. Each activity plan is approximately 15-20 minutes in length.

Movement 1. Reflecting on Life Experience

- Select Activity #1 or #2.

Movement 2. Exploring the Christian Practice

- Use the content from Activities #3 through #7.

Movement 3. Experiencing the Christian Practice

- Select experiences (based on program schedule) from Activities #8-18.

Movement 4. Living the Practice

- Conclude with the “Reflecting” questions and the “Developing a Bible Reading Action Plan” (see Movement 4 earlier).

## Intergenerational or Family Learning Program (Experience Centers)

The four movements and the Reading the Bible activities can be used to design an intergenerational or family program using Reading the Bible experience centers in a schedule that allows for three rounds of activities. Offer as many experience centers to accommodate the size of the group, and the physical space and leaders that you have. All of the Reading the Bible Activities can be published on a website and designed onto a playlist for continuing learning.

Large Group Gathering and Opening Prayer Experience (10 minutes)

Movement 1. Reflecting on Life Experience (10-15 minutes)

- Select Activity #1 or #2.

Movement 2. Exploring the Christian Practice (10 minutes)

- Use the content from Activities #3 through #7.

Movement 3. Experiencing the Christian Practice: Select from Activities #8-#18.

- Round 1: Bible Centers – a mix of all ages and age-appropriate centers (20 minutes)  
Break—move to next Center (5 minutes)
- Round 2: Bible Centers – a mix of all ages and age-appropriate centers (20 minutes)  
Break—move to next Center (5 minutes)
- Round 3: Bible Centers – a mix of all ages and age-appropriate centers (20 minutes)  
Break—move to next Center (5 minutes)

Movement 4. Living the Practice

- Conclude with the “Reflecting” questions and the “Developing a Bible Reading Action Plan” (see Movement 4 earlier).

Closing Prayer

## Small Group Program (Guided Experience)

The four movements and Reading the Bible activities can be designed into a multi-session small group program of 90 minutes per sessions. Create a Reading the Bible Guide (print, digital) to accompany the program. All of the activities can be published on a website and designed onto a playlist for each session. Here’s an example of a 4-week program.

Week #1. Movements 1 and 2: Fundamentals of Reading the Bible

Movement 1. Reflecting on Life Experience

- Select Activity #1 or #2.

Movement 2. Exploring the Christian Practice

- Use the content from Activities #3 through #7.

Week 2. Movement 3. Experiencing the Christian Practice

- Select 3-5 Activities from Activities #8-#18, but save #11.

Week 3. Movement 3. Experiencing the Christian Practice

- Select 3-5 Activities from Activities #8-#18, but save #11.

Week 4. Movement 4. Living the Practice

- *Option: A Practice Panel.* This would be a good time to utilize a panel of people who practice Reading the Bible in their daily life. This can mix of church leaders (staff and volunteers) and church members of all ages. Ask them to share a story (3 minutes) of one of the ways they practice reading the Bible in their daily life. Identify these people in advance and prepare them for their role.
- Conclude with the “Reflecting” questions and the “Developing a Bible Reading Action Plan” (see Movement 4 earlier).

## Retreat or Extended Time Program (Guided and Experience Centers)

The four movements and Reading the Bible activities can be designed into a retreat experience with a blend of whole group experiences and small group experience centers.

Opening Prayer

Large Group: Guided Experience – 1 hour

### Movement 1. Reflecting on Life Experience

- Select Activity #1 or #2.

### Movement 2. Exploring the Christian Practice

- Use the content from Activities #3 through #7.

#### Break

#### Small Groups: Experience Centers–Part One – 90 minutes

##### Movement 3. Experiencing the Christian Practices

- Select from Activities #8-#18, but save #11.
- Divide the participants into four groups and have them rotate through four, 20-minute experiences in four spaces throughout the facility with 5-minute breaks to change spaces

#### Break

#### Small Groups: Experience Centers–Part Two – 90 minutes

##### Movement 3. Experiencing the Christian Practices

- Select new Activities from #8-#18, but save #11.
- Divide the participants into four groups and have them rotate through four, 20-minute experiences in four spaces throughout the facility with 5-minute breaks to change spaces

#### Large Group: Guided Experience – 1 hour

##### Movement 4. Living the Practice

- *Option: A Practice Panel.* This would be a good time to utilize a panel of people who practice Reading the Bible in their daily life. This can mix of church leaders (staff and volunteers) and church members of all ages. Ask them to share a story (3 minutes) of one of the ways they practice reading the Bible in their daily life. Identify these people in advance and prepare them for their role.
- Conclude with the “Reflecting” questions and the “Developing a Bible Reading Action Plan” (see Movement 4 earlier).

#### Closing Prayer

## Prayers

### An Opening or Closing Prayer

Loving God,

we savor your nurturing presence within and among us. You fill our every hunger and need.

Grant that we may always focus on your Word as life’s sustenance and support.

May your Word light our lives

as we seek to be your light to all people. Amen.

### A Prayer for Reading the Bible

Open my ears to hear you

Open my mind to absorb the meaning of your sacred book Open my eyes to see your living

Word active in the world Open my heart to courageously love you

Open my hands to serve you in others as I carry your Word with me always



# Bible Activities from Vibrant Faith at Home

[www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/vibrant-faith-home.html](http://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/vibrant-faith-home.html)

The Bible activities from Vibrant Faith at Home are short (usually only 5-10 minutes). They are in PDF files with a simple formatting to make it easy to use and download. You can provide these to people in variety of ways through age group programming, family or intergenerational programming, on a website, in an e-newsletter, on social media, etc. Vibrant Faith grants permission to use these activities in print or digital formats.

## Children & Families

<https://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/families-with-children.html>

- Come Eat Breakfast
- Easter Cupcake
- Getting Along
- Good Friday Cross
- Holy Feet
- Jesus' First Miracle
- Parade with Psalms
- Reading Psalm 23 with God
- Resurrection Faith and Doubt
- Take a Spring Break
- Take Root, Sprout, Grow
- Waiting at the Tomb
- Be Not Afraid
- Creating an Altar at Home
- Fruits of Summer
- Ouch
- Sunrise Morning
- Water of the Bible
- God's Promise
- Everything We Need
- Fall Harvest Time
- Thankful Tree
- Toast to Diversity
- Trees in Fall
- Worry Knot
- Bible by the Numbers
- The Christmas Star
- Countdown to Christmas
- Dwell with Us
- Love, Love, Love

- Spicy Crown

## Children: Bible Trek

<https://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/just-for-kids.html>

- Bread of Life
- Faith Through the Bible (multiple activities): Creation, Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Abandoned by God, Immanuel, New Creation
- Friends
- Getting Along
- God: A Photograph
- Living Water
- Our Good Shepherd
- Reading a Story with God
- Reading Psalm 23 with God
- Take a Spring Break
- Teachers
- The Best Kind of Friend
- The Way
  - Word Made Flesh

## Teens

<https://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/teens--families.html>

- Blessing Board
- Carrying the Cross
- Christ Dying on the Cross
- Get Your Ash
- Holy Week Ups and Downs
- Marshmallow Message
- The Gospel Flame
- When We Are Apart
- Dealing with Doubts
- Freedom to Get Lost
- God's Hopes for You
- High Expectations
- Noticing our Neighbor
- Cloud of Saints
- Dealing with Disappointments
- Family Bonds
- Know Your Bible Puzzle
- Living and Dying
- Bad Days Jar

- Responsive Story
- Sticking Together
- What a Hypocrite

## Young Adults

<https://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/young-adults.html>

- A Sinking Feeling
- As Jesus Teaches
- Back Home
- Camping with Jesus
- Depths of Addiction
- Keep Up with the Lectionary
- Kindred Spirit Guide
- Prodigal Journey
- Nic at Night
- Sowing Seed
- Season of Change
- Weather Worries

## Adults

<https://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/adults--couples.html>

- A Lenten Wilderness
- A Mammoth Picnic
- A Scary Marriage Story
- Appreciate, Admire
- Christmas Journey Revisited
- Come Holy Spirit
- Healing Stories
- Holy Smoke
- How Does Your Garden Grow?
- Just Name It
- Lay Down Your Life
- Love Is
- Performance Pressure
- Right Time and Place
- What Is Caesars
- When Bad Things Happen

# Visual Faith Bible Activities

Vibrant Faith developed the Visual Faith methodology to disciple, engage, and teach the messages of Scripture. The methodology consists of pairing images with sections of Scripture and participants are encouraged to connect with Scripture through the story in the images. The conversation is guided by a series of questions designed to mine the lenses through which participants view the world and that influence their ability to absorb the messages of God's Word.

The Visual Faith Project encourages “visualcy” in three substantive ways:

- Visual faith accompanies provocative images with questions that allow people to see and hear one another's hearts and engage one another's souls.
- Because of the use of images, this methodology engages the individual's natural attractions and aversions and as well creates a natural invitation encouraging deeper levels of conversation and space for the Spirit to move and have impact through the words of Scripture.
- The use of provocative still images is intentional. Still images invite people to use their own story to engage Scripture.

Three elements of Scripture, image, and questions are used in partnership and can vary in order to create a unique experience of learning, growth, and communication. While this practice is simple, it is deeply grounded in and supported by decades of research.

For more about the theory and practice go to <https://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/visual-faith-project.html>.

## Visual Faith Activities

The **32 Visual Faith Experiences** are available for free download. Each one is developed around a Scripture passage and provides a visual approach to connect Scripture to life through images. You can purchase images through Vibrant Faith (<https://vibrantfaith.org/product/vfp-image-database>) or use copyright-free photo websites, such as Unsplash (<https://unsplash.com>) and Pixabay (<https://pixabay.com>).

All of the following activities are available at: <https://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/visual-faith-activities.html>.

- Are Excuses Accepted Here (Luke 14:15-24)
- Asking Too Much of Me (Luke 6:27-36)
- Being Different and Not Fitting (Luke 3:1-18)
- Broken Relationships (Luke 15:11-32)
- Choose One Thing (Luke 10:38-42)
- The Cost of Following Jesus (Luke 14:25-33)
- The Crippling Power of Fear (Luke 8:22-25)

- Do Not Lose Heart (Luke 9:21-27)
- Extended Families Keep On Expanding (Luke 8:19-21)
- Extra Grandparents (Luke 2:22-38)
- Eye Exam or I Opener (Luke 11:33-36)
- Family Rules and Boundaries (Luke 2:41-51)
- Formula for Being Blessed (Luke 11:27-28)
- God Moments (Luke 1:46-55; 67-79)
- How Might I Be of Help (Luke 4:31-37)
- It's Not Easy to Be Faithful (Luke 9:21-27)
- The Key in Living in Peace (Luke 7:36-50)
- Left Speechless (Luke 20:20-26)
- Mocked and Insulted (Luke 22:63-65)
- Naming a Child (Luke 2:21, 1:31, and Matthew 1:21)
- On Watch for God's Next Steps (Luke 12:35-40)
- People Who Surprise Us (Luke 2:8-18)
- Pulled in Different Directions (Luke 4:1-13)
- Road Trip, Meal, and Discovery (Luke 24:13-34)
- Safe House/Relationships (Luke 1:39-45)
- Stress and Worry about Doing Everything Right (Luke 12:22-34)
- Wanna-Be's – No Commitment (Luke 9:57-62)
- Weakness in All (Luke 22:31-34)
- What? A Change in Diet? (Luke 5:33-39)
- Who Is This Jesus (Luke 22:32-38)
- Who's On Your Guest List (Luke 14:12-14)
- Wow! The Neighborhood Has Changed (Luke 10:25-37)

## Bible Resources to Assist with the Activities

### Websites

**Enter the Bible (Luther Seminary):** <https://www.enterthebible.org>

One of the very best resources online for Biblical content to support the Reading the Bible activities and for people to use in studying the Bible is "Enter the Bible" from Luther Seminary. It is designed to help people understand more about the Bible and how it relates to their faith and life. It is written by Luther Seminary faculty, so it's information you can trust. It has information on every book of the Bible: commentary, context, history, and more.

**Bible Gateway (HarperCollins Publishing):** <https://www.biblegateway.com>

Bible Gateway is a searchable online Bible in more than 200 versions and 70 languages that you can freely read, research, and reference anywhere. With a library of audio Bibles, a mobile app, devotionals, email newsletters, and other free resources, Bible Gateway equips people to not only read the Bible, but understand it.

## Online Playlists

The Reading the Bible Activities can be designed online playlists of Bible experiences for different age groups published on a website or in digital newsletters. One example of playlists is from the Michigan Conference of the UMC: <https://michiganumc.org/playlists>.

## Bible Apps

There are many Bible apps and websites that provide one or more Bible translations, Bible studies and reading plans, and devotions. Here are two suggestions:

**The Bible App (YouVersion):** <https://www.bible.com>

(Bible reading plans: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans>)

This is the most downloaded Bible app. It has over 1200 Bible versions, over 60 languages, Bible reading plans, devotions, and much more. People can listen to audio Bibles, create prayers, study with Friends, and customize the app to their personal preferences. There is also a “Bible App for Kids” designing it specifically to engage children with 41 “big” Bible stories on an age-appropriate level. Kid-friendly navigation helps them find and select whichever story they want, then reads it aloud to them in a friendly narrative style. (<https://www.youversion.com/the-bible-app-for-kids>)

**Bible Gateway App (HarperCollins Publishing):** <https://www.biblegateway.com/app>

The Bible Gateway App makes it easy to read, hear, study, and understand the Bible. Features include: 90 different translations, 20 audio Bibles, search for verses and keywords, Bible commentaries, personal notetaking, a “verse of the day,” and reading plans. iPad users can view up to three different translations side-by-side.

## Study Bibles

There are dozens of excellent Study Bibles available in different translations. It would be helpful to use a Study Bible with many of the Reading the Bible activities, as well as to recommend a Study Bible for people to use. Here are a few suggestions:

- *New International Version (NIV) Study Bible, Fully Revised Edition.* Zondervan, 2021.
- *HarperCollins Study Bible, New Revised Standard Bible.* Harper Collins, 2017.
- *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version.* Oxford University Press, 2018.
- *Little Rock Catholic Study Bible.* Liturgical Press, 2011.
- *The Catholic Study Bible 3rd Edition.* Oxford University Press, 2016.
- *The Ave Catholic Notetaking Bible.* Ave Maria Press, 2021
- *Anselm Academic Study Bible, Revised New American Bible.* St. Mary’s Press, 2013.

## Videos on the Practice of Reading the Bible

There are numerous videos available on YouTube and within the resources of each Christian denomination for all of the Christian Practices. It is beyond the scope of this resource to recommend videos. Using YouTube to search for available videos will produce a number of excellent resources. Here are several sources of religious video programs to consult:

- Amplify Media: <https://my.amplifymedia.com/amplify/home>
- Ascension Presents (Ascension Press): [YouTube Channel](#)
- BibleProject (<https://bibleproject.com>) and The Bible Project TV (<https://bibleproject.com/stream>)
- BustedHalo: <https://bustedhalo.com/category/video> and [BustedHalo YouTube Channel](#).
- Catholic Central: <https://www.catholiccentral.com>
- Church Knows Church: Things We Can Do: <https://chuckknowschurch.com> and [ChuckKnowsChurch YouTube Channel](#)
- Formed: <https://formed.org> (Catholic video resource)
- Minno Kids: <https://visit.gominno.com> and [YouTube Channel](#)
- ODB Films: <https://odbfilms.com> and [Video Catechism \(VCAT\)](#)
- Paraclete Press: <https://paracletepress.com/products/paraclete-video-streaming-4>
- Right Now Media: <https://www.rightnowmedia.org>
- Saddleback Kids Videos: [YouTube Channel](#)
- The Skit Guys: <https://skitguys.com> and [The Skit Guys on YouTube](#)
- Thirty Seconds or Less: <http://thirtysecondsorless.net> and #30SecondBible
- Work of the People: <https://www.theworkofthepeople.com>
- Worship House Media: <https://www.worshiphousemedia.com>
- Worship House Kids: <https://www.worshiphousekids.com>

# Background

(From the American Bible Society: (<https://biblesources.americanbible.org>))

## Three Approaches to Bible Reading

Reading any document, even the Bible, can often become routine. And reading the Bible in the same way every time can keep us from discovering biblical truths that can be found beneath the actual words on the page. So when we become intentional about reading the Bible with a particular approach or method in mind, the Bible can speak to us in new and exciting ways. Three primary approaches to reading the Bible include the social-historical, the literary, and the theological. By following any one of these approaches, we read the Bible with certain questions in mind, constantly interacting with the words of the text and their context. Each of these approaches can reveal different aspects of the Bible. Exploring these can deepen our experiences with Scripture and broaden our awareness of God.

### Social-Historical Reading

The social-historical approach is primarily interested in the world behind the text, that is, the social structures, historical events, customs, as well as social issues related to roles, power, and class. We learn to ask questions about the events described or assumed in the biblical text, the key places mentioned (like cities, nations, geographical features, or trade routes), and the political scene within ancient Israel (for the Old Testament) or the Greek-Roman world (for the New Testament). Likewise, attention to the social world behind the text can involve exploring such issues as how the characters relate to one another in terms of power and class (for example, king/servant, parent/child, or teacher/student), what customs are assumed in the biblical text, and how the biblical world is shaped by the religion and philosophy of the larger world (like the Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, or Roman worlds).

### Literary Reading

The literary approach, by contrast, is interested in the words of the text itself, that is, how they are put together and how they convey the biblical message. This approach helps us pay attention to literary features like key words or themes that are repeated throughout a passage (or an entire book), the type of literature being read (for example, law, prophecy, Gospel, letter), the use of unique or unexpected words, the literary context of the passage (what happens immediately before and after it), and how the plot or storyline is developed. In addition, the literary approach is interested in the characters of the biblical text: how they are described and how they interact, what they know or do not know, how they solve problems and deal with conflict, achievements, downfalls, and what they discover or teach about God.



## Theological (Devotional) Reading

The theological (or devotional) approach seeks to discover new truths about God and our relationship to God. This approach, the most personal of the three approaches, is interested in the overall purpose or intent of the passage being read. It seeks to answer questions like What did I learn about God (or Jesus Christ) from this passage? What did I learn about human nature? And what did I learn about my own relationship to God and Jesus Christ? In other words, the theological approach wrestles with the “So What” question of reading the Bible: How does this passage apply to me and how is my life changed (or need to be changed) in light of my reading it?

As you begin to be intentional about reading God’s Word, you might want to select a passage and read it several times, following each of the approaches described above. Whichever approach we choose to follow, the challenge for all of us is to become more and more aware of the relevance of the Bible and how we can be changed by making it a part of our lives.

## Different Kinds of Literature in the Bible

We know the Bible as one large book, but it is really more like a collection of several books of many different kinds of literature. So when studying the Bible, it is important to recognize the type of literature we are reading, that is, the literary form the biblical author used to tell the message. The two largest categories of biblical literature are prose and poetry. Prose is often used when telling stories about people and historical events, and it usually includes dialogue. Most of the Bible is written in prose, with such features as plot, character, and timing. Poetry is also used throughout the Bible, and certain books are written completely in poetic form. Much of the poetry in the Old Testament can be described as ancient Hebrew poetry, which is marked by a literary feature called parallelism. This feature is the repetition or reinforcement of a single idea in successive lines of poetry. Poetry in the Bible also uses features common to modern poetry of word plays, rhymes, and meter to communicate its message.

Beyond these two categories, the Bible includes a large number of specific types of literature (some expressed in prose and others in poetry). Some types comprise entire books; the most important of these are laws, historical prose, psalms and songs, wisdom and proverbs, Gospels, and letters. Other types are included within books, like prayers, parables, prophecy, and genealogies (family lists).

### Laws

Many ancient Near Eastern cultures developed law codes. One of the most famous was the Law Code of the Babylonian leader Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.). Like these cultures, ancient Israel developed its own law code. The first five books of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) make up the section known as the Torah, or the Law. Not all the literature in these five books is legal material, but much of it is. God gave these laws to the people of Israel to help them worship properly, to live as God’s holy people, and to treat one another with respect and care. The laws in the books include ones that forbid things (Do not...) and others that encourage things (Do...). The most well-known collection

of laws in the Bible is the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20.1-17; Deuteronomy 5.6-21). Other collections are found in Exodus 21.1—23.19; Leviticus 1.1—7.36; Numbers 6.1-21; Deuteronomy 14.3—17.7; James 4.11,12.

## Historical Prose

Throughout the Bible, historical prose tells the story of God’s people. Historical prose intends to tell a story and includes characters, events, dates, places, and details of conflict and resolution. In the Old Testament, this literature tells about ancient Israel’s history from the settlement in the Promised Land of Canaan around 1250 B.C. to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and beyond. The historical books like Joshua, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings describe the activities of important characters like the leader Joshua, the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and kings David and Solomon. These books also describe what happened to the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, including how they were defeated by foreign enemies. In the New Testament, the book of Acts tells the history of the early church, from its beginnings in Judea to its influence in Rome.

## Psalms and Songs

The book of Psalms, considered the hymnbook of ancient Israel, is a collection of 150 psalms or songs that were used in private and public worship. Each psalm is a song or poem; some with only a few verses and others with more than one hundred verses. There are poems in other biblical books, and the prophetic books (like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea) use poetry to deliver their messages. Many of the poems and songs in the Old Testament are among the oldest pieces of biblical literature (Judges 5.1-31). Other examples of poetry in the Old Testament include the books of Job and the Song of Songs, as well as the poems at Exodus 15.1-8; Deuteronomy 32.1-43; 1 Samuel 2.1-10; Judges 5.2-31; Isaiah 5.1-7; Jonah 2.2-9. Poems are also found in the New Testament. Some examples are Luke 1.46-55; Philippians 2.6-11; and Revelation 15.3,4.

## Wisdom and Proverbs

Wisdom literature occurs throughout the Bible, but it is concentrated in the Old Testament books of wisdom: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Wisdom literature in the Old Testament has very little to say about Israel’s history and the worship of God. Instead, it is focused on practical advice, wise counsel, and philosophic reflections about God and human beings. The book of Proverbs is a collection of short, wise sayings about everyday issues like friends, marriage, finances, honesty, hard work, and loyalty. The books of Job and Ecclesiastes are more lengthy and philosophical, as if their wisdom is being passed on from a wise teacher to younger students. These books, in particular, deal with morality and hard questions about life and death. In addition to these three books, wisdom literature can be found in certain psalms (like Psalms 1 and 37). The wisdom tradition is also evident in the New Testament. Examples can be found in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7) and in James 3.2-8 and 4.13-17.

## Gospels

The word “Gospel” comes from the Old English word “godspel,” which is a strict translation of the Greek word “euangelion,” meaning “good news.” As such, the New Testament Gospels tell the good news about Jesus Christ: primarily his life, death, and resurrection. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are not repetition of one another. They each present various accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Since Jesus himself left no writings, the Gospel writers collected stories and eyewitness descriptions that had been passed on by word of mouth for several years after Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. The Gospels were probably written down in the present form between thirty and sixty years after Jesus. Without the Gospels, we would have very little information about the actual life of Jesus, his crucifixion, and how God brought him back to life.

## Letters

Several books in the New Testament are actually letters written by the apostle Paul or other leaders in the early Church. These letters are written in the traditional Greek letter-writing style of the first century A.D. Following a standard structure of parts, the person writing the letter is clearly identified at the opening of the letter (see, for example, Romans 1.1-6). This is followed by the addressee, that is, the persons being written to, and greetings (Romans 1.7). In many New Testament letters, a prayer of thanksgiving follows the greeting (Romans 1.8-15). The largest section of the letter is the “body,” which deals with problems, advice, explanation, encouragement—whatever the overall intent of the letter is (Romans 1.16—15.35). A final greeting and blessing closes the letter (Romans 16.1-27). In most New Testament letters, different kinds of literature can be found, including prayers, teachings, wisdom, warnings, hymns, and personal news.

Most of Paul’s letters address specific Jewish or Christian communities with specific purposes in mind. Other letters in the New Testament, however, deal with more general questions that were of concern to the early Christian churches. The books of Hebrews and James, as well as 1 John, are examples of these general types of letters.

## Prayers

Prayers appear throughout the Bible, in both prose and poetry. What makes prayer a unique type of literature is that it expresses direct communication between human beings and God. The book of Psalms contains many prayers that are written in poetic form, some asking for God’s help (Psalms 79, 80), some giving thanks to God at the time of harvest (Psalm 126), and others asking God for forgiveness (Psalms 12, 51, 120). Both the Old and New Testaments contain numerous prayers from God’s people. Some examples are Genesis 18.27,28; Exodus 17.4; Judges 5.2-31; 1 Kings 3.6-9; Jonah 2.2-9; Luke 11.2-4; John 17.1-26; Romans 16.25-27; Hebrews 13.21. Perhaps the most famous prayer in the Bible is the one Jesus taught his disciples found in Matthew 6.9-13 (the Lord’s Prayer).

## Parables

Parables are brief stories that use familiar, everyday lessons to teach an important truth about God. Parables can be short sayings or longer stories that build on common human experience (like

farming). The stories themselves are usually simple, but the more important truth is sometimes harder to grasp. The prophet Isaiah told a parable about a vineyard that failed to produce grapes, so the vineyard owner cut away the vines. He then explained that the vineyard were the Israelites of his day who had been unfaithful to God, so God was ready to punish them for refusing to do right (Isaiah 5.1-7). Other examples of parables in the Old Testament include a lesson about kingship (Judges 9.1-21) and a warning to King David from the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 12.1-15). In the New Testament, Jesus frequently used parables when teaching about how God wanted people to live (Mark 4.33,34). Some of his parables were short sayings (Matthew 6.22,23; 15.14), while others were longer stories. The most well-known parables of Jesus are about the farmer who planted seed (Matthew 13.3-9), the Great Banquet (Matthew 22.1-10), the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.30-37), the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11-32), and the Unfair Judge (Luke 18.1-8).

## Prophecy

Prophecy (or prophetic speech) accounts for a large portion of the literature of the Old Testament. The prophets delivered their prophecies (or oracles) to various audiences, like the king, the priests, or people at the temple. What is most important about prophecy is that these messages are not directly from the prophets. Rather, the messages of the prophets are from God; the prophets are the spokespersons who deliver God's prophecies to the respective audiences. A prophecy is usually introduced with the phrase "The LORD has said," or "The LORD God says." Prophetic speech is often expressed in vivid poetry, usually taking advantage of metaphors, symbols, and elevated language. The prophets of ancient Israel were less concerned about predicting the future than they were about what it means to live as God's people. Matters of justice, proper worship, respect, treatment of the poor are frequently mentioned in the prophetic books. The books of prophecy in the Old Testament usually combine information about the prophet with the prophet's messages from God. Some powerful examples of prophetic speech include Isaiah 1.2-31; 10.24-27; Jeremiah 2; Ezekiel 36.22-32; Amos 5.4-27; and Zechariah 9.1-17. Examples of prophecy in the New Testament can be found in the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus (Matthew 3.1-12; 24.1-31).

A special type of literature related but not identical to prophecy is called apocalyptic literature. This literature, which takes its name from a Greek word meaning "a revealing or an unveiling," is entirely future oriented, even otherworldly in nature. In addition, apocalyptic literature contains startling visions from God, people who appear in the shape of animals or beasts, numbers that have secret meanings, and detailed predictions about the future. This literature was usually written during times of extreme trouble when hope had all but vanished. Its authors spoke about a time in the future when God will destroy the present world and bring about a new creation. At that time, everyone who has been faithful to God will be rewarded. The two books of Daniel and Revelation are examples of apocalyptic literature in the Bible.

# Activity 1. What's Your Experience of the Bible?

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## Plan

This is designed as a “sit and stand” activity. You can call out people to actually answer questions. Use these or similar words to introduce this activity:

*We all have different levels of experience with the Bible. This simple activity will help to give us a sense of our experiences with the Bible. Please stand or sit according to my instructions.*

You can redesign the activity into a group activity with people sharing answers in their group or create a game show using the questions.

## Activity

1. Stand if you've read from the Bible at least once in the past year.
2. Remain standing if you read from, or hear a reading from, the Bible at least once a month.
3. Remain standing if you read from, or hear a reading from, the Bible at least once a day.
4. Please stand if you can name the two main divisions (main parts) of the Bible.
5. Please stand if you know at least one key difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament.
6. Please stand if you can name three characters from the Old Testament.
7. Please stand if you can name three characters from the New Testament.
8. Please stand if you know how many books there are in the Bible.
9. Please stand if you can name the four gospels in the New Testament.
10. Please stand if you can name the first and last books in the Bible.

## Activity 2. The Bible in Our Lives

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### Plan

Invite small groups and family/household groupings to share their experience of reading the Bible. The Bible in Our Lives presents two ways to help people identify their memories of reading and studying the Bible and their present experience of reading the Bible. The first option is a reflection tool and the second is a questionnaire. Pick the one the best suits your needs.

Give participants time to think about their responses (families/households can work together). Then invite them to share their responses to then questions with their group.

### Shorter Alternative Format

If you would like a simpler, shorted activity, then use the following questions and illustrate each one with examples from the questions on The Bible in Our Lives activity. Give participants time to think about their responses (families/households can work together). Then invite them to share responses to each question with their group.

- ◆ What memories do you have about reading Bible when you were growing up? Give examples of how and when you 1) heard the Bible at home and church, and 2) read and studied the Bible personally, with your family, and at church.
- ◆ What is your experience of reading and studying the Bible today (as an individual and/or as a whole family)? Give examples of how and when you 1) hear the Bible at home and church, and 2) read and study the Bible personally, with your family, and at church.

## The Bible in Our Lives Reflection Activity

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Consider the following questions as a guide to help you get in touch with your own hunger for the Word of God:

- ◆ What kinds of feelings do I experience when I see a Bible? Am I curious? Do I feel a sense of anticipation? Am I intimidated? Am I angry?
- ◆ Where do I keep my Bible in my home? Does its location help or hinder my Bible-reading habits?
- ◆ How often do I read the Bible?
- ◆ How often did my family of origin read the Bible together?
- ◆ Have I ever participated in a Bible study? If so, when and where? If not, why?
- ◆ If I wanted to study the Bible, where would I go to find a reputable Bible study?
- ◆ Do I get discouraged from Bible reading when I meet other people who seem to know a lot about the Bible? Why?
- ◆ Do I experience the Word of God in places other than the Bible? If so, where? If not, why?

# The Bible in Our Lives Questionnaire

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**1. What memories do you have about reading or not reading the Bible? (Check all that apply.)**

- I remember a parent or grandparent reading the Bible for himself or herself.
- I experienced a parent or grandparent reading the Bible to or with me.
- I heard the Bible in Sunday school, religious education classes, and/or vacation Bible school.
- I began reading it for myself when I received a Bible of my own.
- I participated in a Bible study group.
- I took a course in Scripture in college or in an adult religious education program.
- I received a background in Bible through hearing sermons.
- There was a Bible in our home, but I do not recall people reading it.
- I really don't have any memory of reading the Bible when I was growing up.

**2. How do you remember reading and studying the Bible? (Check all that apply)**

- I remember listening to Bible stories at church.
- I remember lectures about the Bible at church.
- I remember discussions about the Bible at church.
- I memorized verses from the Bible.
- I remember singing biblical verses in songs and hymns.
- I remember doing dramatic readings and acting out Bible stories.
- I remember studying the Bible when taught Sunday school or religious education classes.
- I have no memories of studying the Bible in a church community.

**3. What is your experience of reading the Bible today? (Check all that apply)**

- I enjoy reading the Bible and am strengthened by it.
- I take time for a daily Bible reading or use a daily devotional book that has Bible passages.
- I am inspired and guided by the Bible to help me practice my faith in daily life.
- I turn to the Bible as a source of help in time of trouble.
- We have family devotions and conversations using the Bible.
- I have discussions/conversations with my friends about the Bible.
- I participate in a Bible study group in my church community.
- I study the Bible on the Internet.
- I consult the Bible in order to make good decisions in life.
- I do not read the Bible very often.
- I turn to the Bible as a guide for my moral living.
- I believe that reading and studying the Bible leads us to Christ and a deeper faith.
- I do not know where to start reading the Bible.
- I feel intimidated by reading and studying the Bible.
- I am not sure the Bible has much relevance for my life today.
- I just don't have time to read the Bible regularly.



## Activity 3. Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart

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### Plan for Activities #3, #4, #5, and #6

Prepare a presentation organized around the four themes from Activity 3, 4, 5, and 6 to teach people about the basic principles for developing the Christian practice of Reading the Bible. Use examples to illustrate each of the four themes.

Conclude your presentation by inviting the participants to discuss the following questions in their table groups:

- ◆ What new insights into the Christian practice of Reading the Bible did you discover through the presentation?
- ◆ Why is Reading the Bible such an important practice for Christians?
- ◆ What are two or three things you need to keep in mind when you read the Bible?

### Activity

*Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37-40)*

Some people study the Bible. They can tell you all about its literary structure. They can tell you when each book was written. They can tell you the historical circumstances that influenced the author. They can even pronounce all of those lengthy foreign names. But, they can’t seem to understand that God deeply desires a relationship with them. Some people read with the mind but not with the heart.

Some people become deeply infatuated with the Bible. They savor every word that they read, although they may only read certain sections of certain books. They read the ones that feel good. They take these readings to heart and build their lives around them, and they try to build others’ lives around them too. They desperately want everyone to feel the way that they feel. Some people read with the heart but not with the mind.

The Christian practice of reading the Bible calls us to read with both mind and heart. We need to open our minds to the wisdom of those who have given their lives to studying the biblical texts. It’s important to get beyond private reading and allow the community of faith to guide our reading. Joining a reputable Bible study can help us read with an open mind. A good Bible study will challenge us to hear God’s Word with someone else’s ear. We can become more Christ-like when we welcome the perspectives of others who share the body of Christ with us.

We also need to open our hearts. We can be surprised by joy when we discover a deep and personal relationship with the person who lies behind the text. Our intention as we read the Bible is to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ and his followers. Increasing our love for God and neighbor is the primary goal of Bible reading. All of the learning that we do about the Bible should be at the service of these loving relationships. Robert Mulholland puts it this way:

Yes, we must love God with all of our mind. We must seek to utilize our cognitive, intellectual, rational dynamics to the best of our ability. We cannot shirk this at all. However, we must remember that the injunction to love God with all of our mind comes a little bit farther down the road in Jesus' list; loving God with all of our heart and all of our soul precedes loving God with all of our mind. (M. Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation*, p 23.)

A heartfelt reading of scripture is of primary importance. Our academic study of the Bible helps keep our hearts in balance, but it is not the goal of Bible reading. Study serves the loving relationships we have with God and others; love should never take a back seat to study.

## Activity 4. Reading the Bible by Hearing and Obeying

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*When Jesus had said this, a woman spoke up from the crowd and said to him, “How happy is the woman who bore you and nursed you!”*

*But Jesus answered, “Rather, how happy are those who hear the Word of God and obey it!” (Luke 11:27-28)*

Hearing the Word of God and obeying it is the secret to living well and living a Christian life. It is even more important than blood relationship with Jesus. Mary’s holiness is not based upon her physical relationship with Jesus; rather, it is based upon her openness to hearing God’s Word and obeying it. Jesus is not contradicting the woman’s assertion in Luke 11:27; he is redirecting it.

Reading Scripture with human “eyes” alone is like mentally registering the words of the text without recognizing who is speaking through them. (Richard Foster, *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation*, p. 58)

It’s one thing to read the Bible; it’s quite another thing to hear the Word of God. Are you really listening to the Word of God when you read the Bible or are you simply looking at black ink on white pages?

*“Listen, then, if you have ears!” (Matthew 11:15)*

Jesus frequently exhorts his followers to listen, but it is not simply listening to sound waves from another voice. The listening that Jesus wants us to do is listening with our hearts. It is a listening that changes us, like Elizabeth listening to Mary’s greeting in Luke’s gospel.

*Soon afterward Mary got ready and hurried off to a town in the hill country of Judea. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby moved within her. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and said in a loud voice, “You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear! Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord’s mother comes to visit me? For as soon as I heard your greeting, the baby within me jumped with gladness. How happy you are to believe that the Lord’s message to you will come true!” (Luke 1:39-45)*

Mary heard the Word of God when the angel appeared to her earlier in Luke’s gospel. She believed it and obeyed it. Elizabeth likewise was a woman who heard God’s Word and obeyed it. She had ears that were connected to her heart, and when she heard the greeting from the woman who was filled with the living Word of God, she heard it and it caused a stirring deep within her body. And then she could not help herself. She had to proclaim in a loud voice what she had heard.

## Activity 5. Reading the Bible by Hearing with Hopefulness

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When we listen to the Word of God in the Bible, listen through the lens of hopefulness. The text calls us to an obedient response. The words of the Bible are not empty promises; they are promises full of power to change our lives and power to change the world. We should expect that power to be released in us every time we open the Bible.

*Listen! I stand at the door and knock; if any hear my voice and open the door, I will come into their house and eat with them, and they will eat with me. (Revelation 3:20)*

Opening the Bible is like opening a door to a world filled with hope because Jesus is on the other side of the door waiting for us to let him in. His promise is that if we open the door, he will come in and share nourishment with us, and his nourishment will strengthen us for our life's journey. It is important for us to obediently hope for this power to be unleashed when Jesus speaks. Jesus rewards those who listen to him with hopeful obedience.

*When Jesus entered Capernaum, a Roman officer met him and begged for help: "Sir, my servant is sick in bed at home, unable to move and suffering terribly."*

*"I will go and make him well," Jesus said.*

*"Oh no, sir," answered to officer. "I do not deserve to have you come into my house. Just give the order, and my servant will get well. I, too, am a man under the authority of superior officers, and I have soldiers under me. I order this one, 'Go!' and he goes; and I order that one, 'Come!' and he comes; and I order my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."*

*When Jesus heard this, he was surprised and said to the people following him, "I tell you, I have never found anyone in Israel with faith like this. I assure you that many will come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of heaven. But those who should be in the Kingdom will be thrown out into the darkness, where they will cry and gnash their teeth." Then Jesus said to the officer, "Go home, and what you believe will be done for you."*

*And the officer's servant was healed that very moment. (Matthew 8:5-13)*

The Roman officer believed in the power of Jesus' word. He hoped obediently for that power to change things in his life. But notice that his obedience was not forced. He freely approached Jesus and Jesus freely gave him that for which he hoped. Jesus does not drag us into obedience. We are invited to open the door, hear the word and obey it freely.

## Activity 6. Reading the Bible and Acting on What We Hear

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When Jesus calls, will you go?

*As Jesus walked along the shore of Lake Galilee, he was two fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew, catching fish with a net. Jesus said to them, "Come with me, and I will teach you to catch people." At once they left their nets and went with him. (Mark 1:16-18)*

And so the lives of two true disciples began. They heard the Word of God and they acted on it. They gave up everything for Jesus who loves them and saves them.

The true test of whether or not we are hearing God's Word is how we are living. Living well in response to God's Word means that we allow what we hear in the scriptures to guide every dimension of our lives. We all know and believe that Jesus came to save us, but we often forget that he saves every part of us: heart, soul, mind and body. We won't experience the true depth of God's love for us until we surrender every part of our lives to the guidance of God's Word. Our jobs, our pastimes, our households, our finances, our friendships, our battles, our thoughts and our words must all be guided by God's Word.

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus. He spoke the Word of God to them, explaining how all the Scriptures point to him. They heard the Word of God, they took it to heart, and they were prepared to encounter him personally in the breaking of the bread. Their response was action:

*They said to each other, "Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"*

*They got up at once and went back to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven disciples gathered together with the others and saying, "The Lord is risen indeed! He has appeared to Simon!" (Luke 24:32-34)*

What makes this action more compelling is that they raced back to Jerusalem at night, a dangerous adventure in those times. The fear of the night could not overpower the fire burning in their hearts, a fire burning for love of Jesus and for love of their neighbors who needed to hear the good news.

Hearing the Word of God set their hearts on fire. Does your heart burn when you hear God's Word in the Bible? Do you allow the fire to motivate you into action? How do you live well through the Christian practice of reading the Bible?

# Activity 7. The Bible Name Game

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## Plan & Activity

1. Write the following Bible names on separate slips of paper: Mary, Adam, Samson, Herod, Eli, Esau, Elizabeth, David, Martha, Ruth, Rebecca, Cain, Paul, Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Simeon, Elijah. Put these names in a bowl.
2. Write the following Bible names on separate slips of paper (see worksheet): Joseph, Eve, Delilah, Herodias, Samuel, Jacob, Zechariah, Jonathan, Mary, Naomi, Isaac, Abel, Barnabas, Abraham, Rachel, Aaron, Anna, Elisha. Put these names in a separate bowl.
3. Each player takes turns drawing one piece of paper from each bowl. If the player believes he or she has a biblical match, the player must say so. If correct, the player is awarded a point. If incorrect, the player loses a point.
4. Continue play until all characters are appropriately matched. Players can get a bonus point by telling a detail about the biblical pair that they match.
5. Here are the proper matches and corresponding Bible verses:
  - ◆ Mary and Joseph – Luke 2:4-7
  - ◆ Adam and Eve – Genesis 2:7-3:24
  - ◆ Samson and Delilah – Judges 16:4-22
  - ◆ Herod and Herodias – Matthew 14:1-12
  - ◆ Eli and Samuel – 1 Samuel 3:1-18
  - ◆ Esau and Jacob – Genesis 25:19-34
  - ◆ Elizabeth and Zechariah – Luke 1:57-80
  - ◆ David and Jonathan – 1 Samuel 20:1-42
  - ◆ Martha and Mary – Luke 10:38-42 and John 11:1-44
  - ◆ Ruth and Naomi – Ruth 1:1-22
  - ◆ Rebecca and Isaac – Genesis 24:1-66
  - ◆ Cain and Abel – Genesis 4:1-16
  - ◆ Paul and Barnabas – Acts 13:43-52
  - ◆ Sarah and Abraham – Genesis 18:1-15
  - ◆ Jacob and Rachel – Genesis 29:15-30
  - ◆ Moses and Aaron – Exodus 4:1-17
  - ◆ Simeon and Anna – Luke 2:22-38
  - ◆ Elijah and Elisha – 1 Kings 19:9-21

## The Bible Name Game

Mary	Joseph
Adam	Eve
Samson	Delilah
Herod	Herodias
Eli	Samuel
Esau	Jacob
Elizabeth	Zechariah
David	Jonathan
Martha	Mary
Ruth	Naomi
Rebecca	Isaac
Cain	Abel
Paul	Barnabas
Sarah	Abraham
Jacob	Rachel
Moses	Aaron
Simeon	Anna
Elijah	Elisha

## Activity 8. Bible Search Game

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### Plan

Select which translation you want to use: Good News (from the American Bible Society), New American Bible (Catholic), or the New Revised Standard Version. Provide each group with a copy of the Bible you have chosen.

Select the column of clues for your Bible translation. Cut out the clues and put them in an envelope. Make enough envelopes for each family/household group and for each small group.

Distribute the envelopes with the “Bible Search Clues” to each group. Present the following instructions to the groups:

This is a relay race that will require each member of your group to look up at least one Bible verse and find a particular word in that verse for your team. When you find the word, you need to write it on the clue paper.

Everyone in the group must look up at least one verse. Young children may be assisted by older children or adults.

Players may not select a new clue until the previous clue is written on the paper.

After all the words are found, the group must rearrange the words in order to form a coherent sentence that expresses the theme of today’s lesson.

The group that discovers the correct sentence first wins.

Answer to the Puzzle: Jesus Christ is the living Word of God.



## Bible Search Clues for Bible Search Game

Good News Translation	New American Bible	New Revised Standard Version
Romans 6:3 13th Word Write the word below:	Romans 6:3 11th Word Write the word below:	Romans 6:3 14th Word Write the word below:
1 Chronicles 11:10 2nd Word Write the word below:	1 Chronicles 11:11 2nd Word Write the word below:	1 Chronicles 11:11 2nd Word Write the word below:
Luke 4:1 1st Word Write the word below:	Luke 4:1 6th Word Write the word below:	Luke 4:1 1st Word Write the word below:
1 John 1:1 7th Word Write the word below:	1 John 1:1 28th Word Write the word below:	1 John 1:1 33rd Word Write the word below:
Deuteronomy 5:6 6th Word Write the word below:	Deuteronomy 5:6 6th Word Write the word below:	Deuteronomy 5:6 6th Word Write the word below:
Exodus 12:29 7th Word Write the word below:	Exodus 12:29 3rd Word Write the word below:	Exodus 12:29 8th Word Write the word below:
Isaiah 19:18 25th Word Write the word below:	Isaiah 19:17 4th Word Write the word below:	Isaiah 19:17 4th Word Write the word below:
John 6:57 2nd Word Write the word below:	John 6:57 4th Word Write the word below:	John 6:57 4th Word Write the word below:

## Activity 9. Reading a Biblical Text

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### Plan

Organize people in pairs or family/household groupings. Provide each group with a Bible.

Give one of the following Bible passages to people to read and interpret. Ask them to read their Bible story carefully, paying close attention to both the details of the actual story and to the message that is written “between the lines.”

- ◆ Genesis 2:4-25 (Creation)
- ◆ Genesis 7:1-19 (The Flood)
- ◆ Genesis 11:1-9 (Tower of Babel)
- ◆ Genesis 22:1-20 (Sacrifice of Isaac)
- ◆ Exodus 14:1-30 (Crossing the Red Sea)
- ◆ Exodus 16:1-36 (Manna and Quail)
- ◆ Exodus 20:1-17 (Ten Commandments)
- ◆ Exodus 21:1-11 (Treatment of Slaves)
- ◆ Leviticus 25:8-17 (Year of Restoration)
- ◆ Leviticus 25:35-38 (Loans to the Poor)

After they have read the story ask them to reflect on the following questions. Ask pairs or groups to share their reflections with the whole group after a few minutes.

- ◆ How did you understand this story when you were a child?
- ◆ As you read the story today, what do you now think the author intended to say?
- ◆ What application, if any, does the story have to contemporary life?



# Activity 10. A Bible Reading Method

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## Plan

Guide the participants in small groups or family/household groupings through this adapted version of the five-step Scripture Union Bible Reading Method (<https://scriptureunion.org>).

Begin by introducing the *100 Essential Bible Readings* from Scripture Union and suggest that people use the five-step method as they move through the 100 readings.

This Bible reading program, developed by Scripture Union, is built around 100 carefully selected short Bible passages—50 from the Old Testament and 50 from the New Testament. The passages are usually one to two chapters in length and can easily be read in 10 minutes or less. The 100 readings take you through all of the major types of biblical writing including Historical books, Poetry and Wisdom Literature, the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation. The Bible passages are organized into 20 sets of five readings each. This 100 Essential Bible Readings program enables you to get the big picture of God’s Word and in the process develop a daily Bible reading habit.

Select one reading from the list of 100 to demonstrate the process outlined in Activity 11.

## Activity

### Pray

Pray before reading, asking God to help you understand and receive his Word. Through Christ you are in the Father’s holy presence. Approach him boldly, humbly and expectantly.

### Read

Next, read slowly and carefully through the Bible passage. Sometimes, you’ll want to read the passage more than once. You may also find it helpful to read the preceding or following passages to get the context. Take the time to read it as thoroughly as you can, expecting God to answer your prayer for understanding of his Word.

### Reflect

Reflect on what you have read, waiting in openness, ready to obey God’s Word to you. Think through the passage, asking yourself such questions as:

- ◆ What does this passage say? What is its main point?
- ◆ What does it reveal about God, or about me?
- ◆ What insight am I given into myself and into my life situation?
- ◆ What does God require of me now, in thought, word or action?

# A Bible Reading Method

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## Pray

Pray before reading, asking God to help you understand and receive his Word. Through Christ you are in the Father's holy presence. Approach him boldly, humbly and expectantly.

## Read

Next, read slowly and carefully through the Bible passage. Sometimes, you'll want to read the passage more than once. You may also find it helpful to read the preceding or following passages to get the context. Take the time to read it as thoroughly as you can, expecting God to answer your prayer for understanding of his Word.

## Reflect

Reflect on what you have read, waiting in openness, ready to obey God's Word to you. Think through the passage, asking yourself such questions as:

- ◆ What does this passage say? What is its main point?
- ◆ What does it reveal about God, or about me?
- ◆ What insight am I given into myself and into my life situation?
- ◆ What does God require of me now, in thought, word or action?

These questions will help you "dig deeper" into the meaning of the passage as you study and reflect. Many people find it helpful to write their answers in a journal or notebook. You may find it helpful to use a Study Bible to help you probe the deeper meaning.

## Apply

The Bible's purpose is not only to give us information about God, but also to help us live in the proper relationship to God and others. Apply what God has taught you from today's reading to the circumstances of life – situations at work, home school, or church. Use what you have learned in order to become more like Jesus.

- ◆ How can God's Word apply to my life today: my situations at home, at work, school or church?

## Pray

End your time as you began, in prayer. This time turn the things you have learned into prayers. Make your discoveries from the Bible the basis of your prayer time. Ask God to help you live out and apply what you learned that day.

## Resource

Check out Scripture Union's daily guide for finding practical help from the Bible at: <https://scriptureunion.org/discovery>. Each day's reading covers 10-15 verses.

# Activity 11. 100 Essential Bible Readings

This Bible reading program, developed by Scripture Union, is built around 100 carefully selected short Bible passages—50 from the Old Testament and 50 from the New Testament. The passages are usually one to two chapters in length and can easily be read in 10 minutes or less. The 100 readings take you through all of the major types of biblical writing including Historical books, Poetry and Wisdom Literature, the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation. The Bible passages are organized into 20 sets of five readings each. This 100 Essential Bible Readings program enables you to get the big picture of God’s Word and in the process develop a daily Bible reading habit.



## OLD TESTAMENT



## NEW TESTAMENT

IN THE BEGINNING	
1	Creation Genesis 1:1–2:25
2	The Fall Genesis 3:1–3:24
3	The Flood Genesis 6:5–7:24
4	God’s Covenant with Noah Genesis 8:1–9:17
5	Tower of Babel Genesis 11:1–11:9

THE JUDGES	
26	Israel’s Disobedience Judges 2:6–3:6
27	Deborah Leads Israel Judges 4:1–5:31
28	Gideon Defeats the Midianites Judges 6:1–7:25
29	Sampson Defeats the Philistines Judges 13:1–16:31
30	The Story of Ruth Ruth 1:1–4:22

THE LIVING WORD	
51	The Word Became Flesh John 1:1–1:18
52	Gabriel’s Message Luke 1:1–1:80
53	The Birth of Jesus Luke 2:1–2:40
54	John the Baptist Luke 3:1–3:20
55	Baptism and Temptation Matthew 3:13–4:17

THE TRAVELS OF PAUL	
76	The Road to Damascus Acts 9:1–9:31
77	The First Missionary Journey Acts 13:1–14:28
78	The Council at Jerusalem Acts 15:1–15:41
79	More Missionary Journeys Acts 16:1–20:38
80	The Trip to Rome Acts 25:1–28:31

ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB	
6	The Call of Abram Genesis 12:1–12:20
7	God’s Covenant with Abram Genesis 15:1–15:21
8	Isaac’s Birth and “Sacrifice” Genesis 21:1–22:19
9	Jacob and Esau Compete Genesis 27:1–28:22
10	Jacob and Esau Reconcile Genesis 32:1–33:20

THE RISE OF ISRAEL	
31	Samuel Listens to God 1 Samuel 1:1–3:21
32	King Saul 1 Samuel 8:1–10:27
33	David and Goliath 1 Samuel 16:1–18:16
34	David and Saul 1 Samuel 23:7–24:22
35	King David 2 Samuel 5:1–7:29

THE TEACHING JESUS	
56	Sermon on the Mount - Part 1 Matthew 5:1–6:4
57	Sermon on the Mount - Part 2 Matthew 6:5–7:29
58	The Kingdom of Heaven Matthew 13:1–13:58
59	The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25–10:37
60	Lost and Found Luke 15:1–15:32

PAUL TO THE CHURCHES	
81	More than Conquerors Romans 8:1–8:39
82	The Fruit of the Spirit Galatians 5:16–6:10
83	The Armor of God Ephesians 6:10–6:20
84	Rejoice in the Lord Philippians 4:2–4:9
85	The Supremacy of Christ Colossians 1:1–1:23

THE STORY OF JOSEPH	
11	Sold Into Slavery Genesis 37:1–37:36
12	Prison and a Promotion Genesis 39:1–41:57
13	Ten Brothers Go to Egypt Genesis 42:1–42:38
14	The Brothers Return Genesis 43:1–44:34
15	Joseph Reveals His Identity Genesis 45:1–46:7

THE FALL OF ISRAEL	
36	David and Bathsheba 2 Samuel 11:1–12:25
37	King Solomon 1 Kings 2:1–3:28
38	Solomon’s Temple 1 Kings 8:1–9:9
39	Elijah and the Prophets of Baal 1 Kings 16:29–19:18
40	The Fall of Jerusalem 2 Kings 25:1–25:30

THE MIRACLE OF JESUS	
61	Feeding the Five Thousand Luke 9:1–9:36
62	Walking on Water Matthew 14:22–14:36
63	Healing a Blind Man John 9:1–9:41
64	Healing a Demon-Possessed Man Mark 5:1–20
65	Raising Lazarus from the Dead John 11:1–11:57

PAUL TO THE LEADERS	
86	Elders and Deacons 1 Timothy 3:1–3:16
87	The Love of Money 1 Timothy 6:3–6:21
88	Good Soldiers of Christ 2 Timothy 2:1–2:26
89	All Scripture is God-breathed 2 Timothy 3:10–4:8
90	The Coming of the Lord 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11

MOSES AND THE EXODUS	
16	Birth of Moses Exodus 1:1–2:25
17	The Burning Bush Exodus 3:1–4:17
18	The Ten Plagues Exodus 6:28–11:10
19	Passover and Exodus Exodus 12:1–12:42
20	Crossing the Red Sea Exodus 13:17–14:31

PSALMS AND PROVERBS	
41	The Lord Is My Shepherd Psalm 23:1–23:6
42	Have Mercy on Me Psalm 51:1–5:19
43	Praise the Lord Psalm 103:1–103:22
44	Godly Wisdom Proverbs 1:1–4:27
45	Proverbs of Solomon Proverbs 16:1–18:24

THE CROSS OF CHRIST	
66	The Last Supper Luke 22:1–22:46
67	Arrest and Trial John 18:1–18:40
68	The Crucifixion John 19:1–19:42
69	The Resurrection John 20:1–21:25
70	The Ascension Acts 1:1–1:11

THE APOSTLES’ TEACHING	
91	The Most Excellent Way 1 Corinthians 13:1–13:13
92	A New Creation in Christ 2 Corinthians 4:1–6:2
93	A Living Hope 1 Peter 1:1–2:12
94	Faith and Works James 1:1–2:26
95	Love One Another 1 John 3:11–4:21

THE LAW AND THE LAND	
21	The Ten Commandments Exodus 19:1–20:21
22	The Golden Calf Exodus 32:1–34:35
23	Joshua Succeeds Moses Joshua 1:1–1:18
24	Crossing the Jordan Joshua 3:1–4:24
25	The Fall of Jericho Joshua 5:13–6:27

THE PROPHETS	
46	The Suffering Servant Isaiah 51:1–53:12
47	Jeremiah’s Call and Message Jeremiah 1:1–3:5
48	Daniel in the Lion’s Den Daniel 6:1–6:28
49	The Story of Jonah Jonah 1:1–4:11
50	The Day of Judgment Malachi 1:1–4:6

THE CHURCH IS BORN	
71	The Day of Pentecost Acts 2:1–2:47
72	Growth and Persecution Acts 3:1–4:37
73	The First Martyr Acts 6:8–8:8
74	Sharing the Word Acts 8:26–8:40
75	Good News for All Acts 10:1–11:18

THE REVELATION	
96	A Voice and a Vision Revelation 1:1–1:20
97	Messages to the Churches Revelation 2:1–3:22
98	The Throne of Heaven Revelation 4:1–7:17
99	Hallelujah! Revelation 19:1–20:15
100	The New Jerusalem Revelation 21:1–22:21

## Activity 12. Studying a Biblical Text

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### Plan

Any tool that people use to help you interpret and study the word of God in a Bible passage, whether it is a group Bible study, a Bible study app, an online resource, or a book should help people to answer at least three questions:

1. What is happening in the reading?
2. How is the occurrence in the reading present in today's world?
3. How is the occurrence in the reading present in my life?

Guide the participants through this process using an example from Matthew 18:1-5 in the Activity. Begin by reading the passage from the Gospel of Matthew.

Have them work in groups discussing their answers to each question, section by section. Conclude by reviewing each of the three questions and people's responses to them.

### Activity

#### Bible Reading: Matthew 18:1-5

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus, asking, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" So Jesus called a child to come and stand in front of them, and said, "I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself and becomes like this child. And whoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes me"*

#### 1. What is happening in the reading? Try this:

- ◆ Identify the characters by name.
- ◆ Identify the words and phrases that seem significant to you.
- ◆ Identify the emotions or feelings that are expressed by the characters.
- ◆ Identify the plot and theme of the reading.
- ◆ Consult a commentary that will help you discover if there are any important details that a 21<sup>st</sup> century reader would likely miss. For example, the word that Jesus would have used for child is synonymous with the word slave. Jesus is not instructing his followers to become childish; he is telling them to become humble, powerless and dependent. This childlike or slave-like disposition, not arrogance or selfish ambition, is the path to Christian greatness.

#### 2. How is the happening in the reading present in today's world? Think about:

- ◆ Newspaper stories about murders that are committed for personal or financial gain

- ◆ Corrupt politicians who are more concerned about selfish desires than service
- ◆ Television programs that glorify selfish ambition at the expense of harmonious relationships
- ◆ An unbalanced competitive spirit that compels some people to cheat to get to the top

### 3. How is the happening in the reading present in my life? Examine this:

- ◆ What characters do I like/dislike in the reading?
- ◆ Why do I like particular characters?
- ◆ Why do I dislike particular characters?
- ◆ How do I see what I like and dislike in my own personality?
- ◆ How do I compete with others in my life?
- ◆ What is my definition of greatness?
- ◆ Am I willing to be dependent upon others? Why or why not?
- ◆ Am I willing to hand my life over to God in the way that a young child must be dependent upon a parent? Why or why not?

The critical task here is to discern how the Word of God that you discover in the Bible is also calling you and guiding you outside of the Bible in your daily life. When we develop an understanding of the Word of God in the Bible, we are then in a privileged position to seek out and follow Jesus, the living Word, with more confidence in our daily experiences. The Bible helps us to clarify in our minds the identity of Jesus so that we will recognize him when he presents himself to us in every moment of every day.



## Activity 13. Reading the Bible with Heart

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### Plan

Select a Gospel story with lots of action (e.g., a parable or healing story) and guide people through the process of “reading with heart.” Several Gospel stories are listed below. It would be helpful to give each person a copy of the Scripture text you chose.

- ◆ The Young Jesus (Luke 2:41-50)
- ◆ Temptation in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)
- ◆ Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)
- ◆ Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
- ◆ The Woman in Simon’s House (Luke 7:36-50)
- ◆ Jesus Instructs the Disciples (Mark 6:7-13)
- ◆ The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
- ◆ Miracle of Cana (John 2:1-12)
- ◆ “Who Do People Say I Am?” (Matthew 16:13-17)
- ◆ Curing of the Blind Man of Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
- ◆ The Miracle of the Loaves (John 6:1-13)
- ◆ Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)
- ◆ Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- ◆ The Woman at the Well (John 4:5-42)
- ◆ The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)
- ◆ Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
- ◆ The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-22)
- ◆ Driving Out the Money Changers (Mark 11:15-17)
- ◆ Washing the Apostles’ Feet (John 13:1-20)
- ◆ The Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46)
- ◆ The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)
- ◆ The Disciples on the Way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

Guide small groups and family/household groupings through this process:

1. Read the Bible passage slowly.
2. Read it again and ask people to pay attention to any verses that draw their attention.
3. Ask each person to identify an attention-grabbing verse that really settles in your heart. Have them share their verse with the group.
4. Invite people to write that verse down on a piece of paper and carry it with them through the week. (Give each person a file card to write their verse.)

## Activity

Select a Gospel story with lots of action (e.g., a parable or healing story) to “read with heart.” A few examples of Gospel stories are listed below. You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select the NRSV translation.

- ◆ The Young Jesus (Luke 2:41-50)
- ◆ Temptation in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)
- ◆ Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)
- ◆ Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
- ◆ The Woman in Simon’s House (Luke 7:36-50)
- ◆ Jesus Instructs the Disciples (Mark 6:7-13)
- ◆ The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
- ◆ Miracle of Cana (John 2:1-12)
- ◆ “Who Do People Say I Am?” (Matthew 16:13-17)
- ◆ Curing of the Blind Man of Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
- ◆ The Miracle of the Loaves (John 6:1-13)
- ◆ Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)
- ◆ Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- ◆ The Woman at the Well (John 4:5-42)
- ◆ The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)
- ◆ Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
- ◆ The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-22)
- ◆ Driving Out the Money Changers (Mark 11:15-17)
- ◆ Washing the Apostles’ Feet (John 13:1-20)
- ◆ The Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46)
- ◆ The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)
- ◆ The Disciples on the Way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

## Reflection

1. Read the Bible passage slowly.
2. Read it again and pay attention to any verses that draw their attention.
3. Identify an attention-grabbing verse that really settles in your heart.
4. Write that verse down on a piece of paper or file card or note, and carry it with you through the day or week.

# Activity 14. Reflective Bible Reading

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## Plan & Activity

Prepare an environment that is conducive to Reflective Bible Reading. Light one or more candles.

1. Introduce the activity with these words: *As Christians, we believe that one of the ways God is present to us is through the Bible. When we prayerfully read the Scriptures, we open our minds and hearts to the Spirit of God. We can be both challenged and affirmed by the Word of God.*
2. It helps for people to take a few deep breaths or stretch your body, then relax. Ask them to acknowledge God's presence with them. Ask God to send the Spirit to be with the group and guide people in this time of reflection.
3. Read the two passages below. Ask people to listen carefully to the readings. You might want to pause after a sentence or phrase.

*Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path.*

*I will keep my solemn promise to obey your just instructions. (Psalm 119:105–106)*

*Speak to one another with the words of psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing hymns and psalms to the Lord with praise in your hearts. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, always give thanks for everything to God the Father. (Ephesians 5:19–20)*

4. Ask people to select the words or phrases that struck you. And then in their small groups or family/household groupings to say their word or phrase. No discussion.
5. Read the two passages a second time, slowly and prayerfully.
6. Ask people to consider the message the passages might have for them: a challenge, an affirmation, or an insight.
7. Read the two passages a third time, slowly and prayerfully.
8. Pause for about several minutes of silence and allow the Spirit to speak to the group. If no words or thoughts come, just sit in the silence. Sometimes God touches us in ways we cannot know.
9. Following your quiet time, ask people to consider how the passage calls them to action. Is there something they need to do to make the Scripture alive for the here and now?
10. Close with a brief prayer.

## Individual Activity

1. Choose a passage from Scripture, about five to ten verses in length. (See the list of “Scripture Passages by Topics” list if you need help.)
2. Choose a comfortable place where you will not be interrupted.
3. Light a candle, if possible. Take a few moments to get your body in harmony with your spirit.
4. Sometimes it helps to take a few deep breaths or stretch your body, then relax.
5. Acknowledge God’s presence with you. Ask God to send the Spirit to be with you and guide you in this time of reflection.
6. Read the passage you have chosen slowly, out loud, listening carefully to it. You might want to pause after a sentence or phrase.
7. Say the words or phrases that struck you.
8. Read the passage a second time, slowly and prayerfully.
9. Consider the message the passage might have for you: a challenge, an affirmation, or an insight. If you are doing this with others, you could invite them to share what comes to mind.
10. Read the passage a third time, slowly and prayerfully.
11. Pause for about ten minutes of silence and allow the Spirit to speak to you. If no words or thoughts come, just sit in the silence. Sometimes God touches us in ways we cannot know.
12. Following your quiet time, consider how the passage calls you to action. Is there something you need to do to make the Scripture alive for you here and now?
13. Close with a brief prayer of thanksgiving or praise to God for the gift of the Spirit.

## Scripture Passages by Topic

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(You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select NRSV version.)

- Affliction:** Romans 8:18–25, 35–39; Sirach 2:1–18; John 14:1–3; Matthew 11:28–30; Philippians 4:12–13; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7.
- Anger:** James 1:19–21; Ephesians 4:26; Proverbs 12:16; Sirach 30:24; Colossians 3:12–13; Psalm 37:7–8
- Charity/Love:** John 13:1–15, 15:9–13; Romans 12:9–21, 13:8–10; 1 Corinthians 13:1–13; 1 Peter 4:8–10; 1 John 3:11–20; 1 John 4:7–12, 18–21.
- Confusion about God:** Isaiah 55:8–9; James 1:13–14; 1 Peter 4:12–13; James 1:2–3; Luke 6:22–23; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10
- Death:** 1 Corinthians 15:19–22; John 11:1–44; Romans 5:12–15; Colossians 3:1–4.
- Discouragement:** Philippians 4:6–8; Psalm 138:7–8; John 14:1; John 14:27; Philippians 1:6; Psalm 94:18–19
- Fear:** John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1:6–7; Romans 8:15; Psalm 91:1–5; Proverbs 3:25–26; Isaiah 43:2; Sirach 34:14; Matthew 10:28
- Forgiveness:** Ezekiel 36:25–36; Matthew 18:15–18, 21–35; Luke 15:11–32.
- Friendship:** Sirach 6:5–17, 9:10–16, 13:1–13; Luke 10:25–37, 11:5–13; John 15:14–17, 20:11–18.
- Happiness or Joyfulness:** Psalm 4:8–9; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 34:6; Psalm 71:23; Isaiah 29:19; Acts 2:28; 3 John 1:4
- Impatience:** Romans 8:24–25; Psalm 37:7–8; Proverbs 25:15; Ephesians 4:1–3; James 5:8–10
- Life:** Isaiah 65:17–25; Genesis 1:1–2:4; John 15:4–7; Romans 6:3–11, Romans 20—23; Matthew 7:13–14; 1 John 5:9–13.
- Loneliness:** Psalm 25:16–17; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 41:13; John 14:18; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 73:23–24; Revelation 3:20
- Marriage:** Genesis 2:18–24; Deuteronomy 24:5; Isaiah 62:3–5; Matthew 19:3–11; 1 Corinthians 7:3–5; Ephesians 5:22–33.
- Peace:** Ezekiel 34:25–31; Isaiah 2:2–5; John 20:19–26; Luke 24:36–43; Philippians 4:4–7; 2 Timothy 2:20–26.
- Physical Illness:** Psalm 103:2–3; Jeremiah 30:17; James 5:14–15; Exodus 23:25; Sirach 31:22; Matthew 10:1
- Sadness:** Sirach 30:21–23; Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 4:8–10; Ecclesiastes 7:3; Matthew 19:21–22; Isaiah 41:10; Proverbs 15:30
- Temptation:** Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:15–16; 1 Timothy 6:9; Psalm 119:9–11; James 1:13–14; Ephesians 6:10–11
- Thankfulness:** Tobit 12:6; Psalm 107; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 30:13; Psalm 105:1; Psalm 118; Daniel 3:89; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Exodus 18:8–12; Psalm 111; John 11:41–42; Ephesians 1:3–6; Philippians 1:3–6.
- Worry:** Matthew 6:25; Matthew 6:34; 1 Peter 5:6–7; Philippians 4:18–19; Mark 13:11; Philippians 4:6

# Activity 15. Praying with the Psalms

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## Plan & Activity

The Psalms are the Bible's book of prayer. The Psalms have been used in worship for thousands of years. We often go to the Psalms today for prayer, personal devotion, and for communal worship. Select one of the Psalm passages below that you feel most comfortable with as the focus of this prayer experience. (You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select the NRSV translation.)

- Psalm 8:1-7 "What is man, that you think of him?"
- Psalm 11:1-7 "I trust in the Lord for safety."
- Psalm 16:1-11 "I am always aware of the Lord's presence."
- Psalm 23:1-6 "The Lord is my shepherd."
- Psalm 25:1-14 "Keep your promise, Lord, and forgive my sins."
- Psalm 30:1-12 "Lord...I will give you thanks forever."
- Psalm 32:1-11 "Happy are those whose sins are forgiven."
- Psalm 62:1-12 "God alone protects and saves me."
- Psalm 63:1-8 "O God....My whole being desires you."
- Psalm 86:1-13a "Teach me, Lord what you want me to do."
- Psalm 103:1-14 "Praise the Lord, my soul!"
- Psalm 121:1-8 "Teach me, Lord, what you want me to do."
- Psalm 139:1-12 "Lord, you have examined me and you know me."

1. Read the Psalm passage you selected in quiet. Read every word, pausing when necessary, in order to let every word present itself to you. Read the words as if you had never read or heard them before. Be open to new insights that may come. Read the words as if they were the words of your own prayer. Whenever you read "I," "my," "me," etc., read it as if that meant you.
2. From the passage you have read, select a phrase, a verse or two verses to be the words you will use to begin your own prayer.
3. Write those words down and then continue writing an additional sentence or two of your own continuing the thoughts and feelings begun by the words of the Psalmist.
4. Here are a few ways you can incorporate praying with the Psalms in their daily life:
  - Read a psalm as you rise each day.
  - Read a psalm as part of your evening prayer.
  - Read a psalm or part of a psalm as part of your meal blessing.
  - When you are experiencing strong emotion, like joy or grief or frustration, flip through the psalms and see which one reflects your own feelings then pray it.

# Activity 16. Lectio Divina

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## Plan

Introduce Lectio Divina (see Activity) and then guide the participants through the more detailed Lectio process below or the simplified process in the Activity. Select a Scripture passage of your choosing, use the Gospel reading from Sunday lectionary, or select a story from the list “Scripture Passages for Imaginative Prayer.” Use Lectio Divina to guide people in a prayer reflection on a Biblical story or text and in imagining how they will live the story or text in their daily life.

### Step 1. Lectio (Reading)

Read the Bible passage to the group. Read it a second time. Invite people to let the words really sink in deeply. Ask them to open their minds and hearts to the meaning of the words; and let the passage speak to them.

### Step 2. Meditatio (Meditation)

Invite people to reflect on the Bible passage. Ask questions such as the following:

- ◆ What does this passage say to me?
- ◆ Who am I in this Scripture?
- ◆ What do I see and hear?
- ◆ What do I think?
- ◆ Which character do I most relate to?
- ◆ What do I need to learn from this passage?

### Step 3. Oratio (Prayer)

Move into the heart of the matter. Consider the following questions to help people respond to God.

- ◆ What do you want to communicate to God?
- ◆ What do you most want in your relationship with God?
- ◆ What emotions do you want to express to God? joy? fear? gratitude? grief?

### Step 4. Contemplatio (Contemplation)

Provide quiet time for people to rest in the presence of God. Play quiet instrumental music.

### Step 5. Action (Action)

Conclude by inviting people to decide on a course of action and make a commitment to follow through with their plan.

- ◆ How is God challenging me?
- ◆ Is there a good thing that God is calling me to do?
- ◆ Is there a harmful thing that God wants me to stop doing?
- ◆ What is the next step I need to take?

## Activity

Lectio Divina is a contemplative way of reading the Bible. It dates back to the early centuries of the Christian Church and was established as a monastic practice by Benedict in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. It is a way of praying the Scriptures that leads us deeper into God's word. We slow down. We read a short passage more than once. We chew it over slowly and carefully. We savor it. Scripture begins to speak to us in a new way. It speaks to us personally, and aids that union we have with God through Christ.

Use the Lectio Divina experience to guide you into a prayer reflection on a Bible passage and imagining how you will live the passage in your daily life.

Select a Scripture passage that you would like to reflect upon and pray with. This may be a story from the Old Testament, a Psalm, a passage from the Prophets, a Gospel story or parable, or a passage from one of Paul's letters. You can also select the Gospel reading from Sunday worship.

1. **Read:** Read the Scripture passage slowly and purposefully. Reflect on it silently for a few minutes to pray with it and to ponder what it might be saying.
2. **Meditate:** Read it a second time followed by a few minutes of silence. Discover a word or two from the passage that is echoing in your heart or stands out for you in any way.
3. **Pray:** What do you want to communicate to God? What emotions do you want to express to God?
4. **Act:** Reflect on how God is challenging you through this Scripture passage. What is God calling me to do? What is the next step you need to take?



# Scripture Passages for Lectio Divina

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(You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select NRSV version.)

- ◆ The Young Jesus (Luke 2:41-50)
- ◆ Temptation in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)
- ◆ Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)
- ◆ Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
- ◆ The Woman in Simon's House (Luke 7:36-50)
- ◆ Jesus Instructs the Disciples (Mark 6:7-13)
- ◆ The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
- ◆ Miracle of Cana (John 2:1-12)
- ◆ "Who Do People Say I Am?" (Matthew 16:13-17)
- ◆ Curing of the Blind Man of Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
- ◆ The Miracle of the Loaves (John 6:1-13)
- ◆ Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)
- ◆ Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- ◆ The Woman at the Well (John 4:5-42)
- ◆ The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)
- ◆ Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
- ◆ The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-22)
- ◆ Driving Out the Money Changers (Mark 11:15-17)
- ◆ Washing the Apostles' Feet (John 13:1-20)
- ◆ The Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46)
- ◆ The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)
- ◆ The Disciples on the Way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

## Activity 17. Visio Divina

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### Plan

The practice of praying with visual images is called *visio divina* or divine seeing. It is adapted from the sixth-century Benedictine practice of Bible reading called *lectio divina*, using both the text and art to help the reader encounter the living Word of God. The rhythm of *visio divina* ignites the senses to “hear and see” the Word of God as one listens, meditates, and prays with the sacred text. Studying a text of Scripture and the illustration involves uncovering layers of meaning. When we have discovered the “voice” of the text, we can bring its images and lessons into the present and discern its significance for our life situations. (Barbara Sutton)

Guide the participants through the *visio divina* process:

1. **Listen:** As you hear the Scripture proclaimed, listen with the “ear of your heart” for a word or short phrase that God has for you this day.

Scripture Example:

*The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come. (Mark 4:26-29)*

2. **Meditate:** What does the word or phrase you have chosen mean to you today?
3. **See:** Look at the image and let your eyes stay with the very first thing that you see. Keep your attention on that one part of the image that first catches your eye.
4. **Contemplate:** Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that part of the image for a minute or so.
5. Now, let your eyes gaze at the whole image. Take your time and look at every part of it. See it all. Reflect on the image for a minute or so.
6. **Reflect:** What emotions does this image evoke in you? What does the image stir up in you, bring forth in you?
7. **Pray:** What do you want to pray for today?

## Activity

The practice of praying with visual images is called *visio divina* or divine seeing. It is adapted from the sixth-century Benedictine practice of Bible reading called *lectio divina*, using both the text and art to help the reader encounter the living Word of God. The rhythm of *visio divina* ignites the senses to “hear and see” the Word of God as one listens, meditates, and prays with the sacred text. Studying a text of Scripture and the illustration involves uncovering layers of meaning. When we have discovered the “voice” of the text, we can bring its images and lessons into the present and discern its significance for our life situations.

1. **Read:** Read the following Scripture passage from the Gospel of Mark. Listen with the “ear of you heart” for a word or short phrase that God has for you this day.

*The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come. (Mark 4:26-29)*

2. **Meditate:** What does the word or phrase you have chosen mean to you today?
3. **See:** Look at the image and let your eyes stay with the very first thing that you see. Keep your attention on that one part of the image that first catches your eye.



Photo by [Melissa Askew](#) on [Unsplash](#)

4. **Contemplate:** Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that part of the image for a minute or so. Now, let your eyes gaze at the whole image. Take your time and look at every part of it. See it all. Reflect on the image for a minute or so.
5. **Reflect:** What emotions does this image evoke in you? What does the image stir up in you, bring forth in you?
6. **Pray:** What do you want to pray for today?

# Activity 18: Visual Faith Bible

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## Plan

Use the Visual Faith process and one of the 32 Visual Faith activities to engage people with the Bible through images/photos. The activity plan for Stress and Worry about Doing Everything Right (Luke 12:22-34) is included on the next several pages.

Vibrant Faith developed the Visual Faith methodology to disciple, engage, and teach the messages of Scripture. The methodology consists of pairing images with sections of Scripture and participants are encouraged to connect with Scripture through the story in the images. The conversation is guided by a series of questions designed to mine the lenses through which participants view the world and that influence their ability to absorb the messages of God's Word.

Three elements of Scripture, image, and questions are used in partnership and can vary in order to create a unique experience of learning, growth, and communication. While this practice is simple, it is deeply grounded in and supported by decades of research. (For more about the theory and practice go to: <https://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/visual-faith-project.html>.)

The 32 Visual Faith Experiences are available for free download. Each one is developed around a Scripture passage and provides a visual approach to connect Scripture to life through images. You can purchase images through Vibrant Faith (<https://vibrantfaith.org/product/vfp-image-database>) or use copyright-free photo websites, such as Unsplash (<https://unsplash.com>) and Pixabay (<https://pixabay.com>).

All of the following activities are available at: <https://www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/visual-faith-activities.html>.

- ◆ Are Excuses Accepted Here (Luke 14:15-24)
- ◆ Asking Too Much of Me (Luke 6:27-36)
- ◆ Being Different and Not Fitting (Luke 3:1-18)
- ◆ Broken Relationships (Luke 15:11-32)
- ◆ Choose One Thing (Luke 10:38-42)
- ◆ The Cost of Following Jesus (Luke 14:25-33)
- ◆ The Crippling Power of Fear (Luke 8:22-25)
- ◆ Do Not Lose Heart (Luke 9:21-27)
- ◆ Extended Families Keep On Expanding (Luke 8:19-21)
- ◆ Extra Grandparents (Luke 2:22-38)
- ◆ Eye Exam or I Opener (Luke 11:33-36)
- ◆ Family Rules and Boundaries (Luke 2:41-51)
- ◆ Formula for Being Blessed (Luke 11:27-28)
- ◆ God Moments (Luke 1:46-55; 67-79)

- ◆ How Might I Be of Help (Luke 4:31-37)
- ◆ It's Not Easy to Be Faithful (Luke 9:21-27)
- ◆ The Key in Living in Peace (Luke 7:36-50)
- ◆ Left Speechless (Luke 20:20-26)
- ◆ Mocked and Insulted (Luke 22:63-65)
- ◆ Naming a Child (Luke 2:21, 1:31, and Matthew 1:21)
- ◆ On Watch for God's Next Steps (Luke 12:35-40)
- ◆ People Who Surprise Us (Luke 2:8-18)
- ◆ Pulled in Different Directions (Luke 4:1-13)
- ◆ Road Trip, Meal, and Discovery (Luke 24:13-34)
- ◆ Safe House/Relationships (Luke 1:39-45)
- ◆ Stress and Worry about Doing Everything Right (Luke 12:22-34)
- ◆ Wanna-Be's – No Commitment (Luke 9:57-62)
- ◆ Weakness in All (Luke 22:31-34)
- ◆ What? A Change in Diet? (Luke 5:33-39)
- ◆ Who Is This Jesus (Luke 22:32-38)
- ◆ Who's On Your Guest List (Luke 14:12-14)
- ◆ Wow! The Neighborhood Has Changed (Luke 10:25-37)

## A Visual Faith Activity

The activity plan for **Stress and Worry about Doing Everything Right (Luke 12:22-34)** is included on the next several pages.



# the visual **faith** project

## A Visual Faith Experience

# Stress and Worry About Doing Everything Right

By Dr. Dick Hardel

**Theme: Stress and Worry About Doing Everything Right** (Luke 12:22-34)

### Intended Audience

It is best to do Visual Faith Exercises within small groups of four or five because it gives more opportunity for all the members of the group to participate. If you have more people for your experience, divide them into two or more small groups. Intergenerational groups are always most helpful because of the variety of experiences. For this exercise it would be most helpful to have the small group consist of people who are of a variety of ages (70+, 45+, 25+, 14+)

### Outcome of Experience

Participants will learn from each other of the major stress factors at different ages in one's life. The images will not only aid the discussion but also help clarify the varieties of stress and cause of stress. The participants will be challenged to trust in the presence and loving care of God in every situation and learn from how a trusting relationship with God is a matter of the heart.

### Introduce Experience

Whether in any level of education, competing in sports, our work in our occupations, finding a job, sustaining a family, raising children, keeping a marriage strong, single parenting, relocating, engaging in activities in church or community organizations, building friendships, preparing for retirement, living on a fixed income of retirement, tackling the tough questions of aging—our hearts and minds are filled with stress and worry most often about doing everything just right in our lives. What does that look like and feel like? Where is God? What is it we treasure? Let's learn from and with each other.

### Image Selection

Spend two or three minutes reflecting on the stress in your life and the various things you worry about doing just right or for the right approval. Then go to the tables with all the images and find at least one image that depicts a major concern presently in your life and another image that visualizes how the worry and stress affect you.



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## Stress and Worry About Doing Everything Right continued...

### Facilitators Questions To Guide Group Discussion

1. How does the image you have selected describe your major concern or worry presently in your life?
2. How does the other image you selected demonstrate the power or affect of the worry and stress in your life?
3. What are some emotions, values, goals, or activities that are prevented because of your worry and stress?
4. To whom or to what in your family is this anxiety of doing everything correctly connected?
5. What support do you need to lessen the worry and anxiety and enjoy life more?
6. How do the major worries and concerns of various generations differ?
7. To whom do you turn most often when confronted with the high level of stress and worry?

### Scripture (Luke 12:22-34)

22 He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! 25 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? 26 If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 28 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! 29 And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. 30 For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. 32 “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

### Image Selection

Give each participant a copy of this Scripture text. Ask one person to read this text aloud. Invite the participants to look carefully at this text and in light of their worries and concerns to circle some words or phrases in the text that grab their attention. Then instruct them to go to the image table and find one or more images that exhibit the words or phrase circled.



# the visual **faith** project

## Stress and Worry About Doing Everything Right continued...

### Questions to Connect Chosen Image with Scriptures

1. With what words or phrase in this Scripture text does the image(s) you have chosen connect?
2. What are the feelings you have as you look at the image?
3. What are images you have seen from others or words in this text that give you hope of less stress and more joy?
4. Where is God for you?
5. Where is your heart in relationship to God?

### Application

- What are three things you treasure? (facilitator could use choosing images again)
- Is there stress connected with these three things? If so, describe the stress. If not, why is there no stress?
- As you look to the future how does God bring you comfort from worries?

### Closing Prayer Time

As the facilitator, create a holy space for the individuals and group to engage in prayer. The heart of the gospel is the death and resurrection of Jesus, our Redeemer. Jesus is the image of the innards or heart of God.

Cut out a large heart. Invite the participants to write with crayon or marker their names on the heart. When all have added their names, place the heart on a small table. Place a resurrection cross in the center of the heart. Light a few candles and turn off other lights. Instruct the participants to sit on chairs around the small table. Simply say to the participants, “Jesus told us in this text that where our treasure is there your heart will be also. Your name is in God’s heart. So what is God’s treasure?” Think and pray about it! No worries!”

Give them 4-5 minutes in prayer.

### Image Packs

We recommend Assorted Set A (set of 100 printed images) for use with this experience or other images that you may already have. You can find Assorted Set A at: <https://vibrantfaith.org/shop/visualfaithcards>



# Reading the Bible in My Family

When I grew up the Bible was a book my parents kept in the closet. It was very pretty with gold letters and glossy pictures. We didn't read it because my parents had never been taught how to read it and it was something that only priests or ministers read.

Today we've come to realize how important it is for everyone to read the Bible. Children, young people, adults—everyone who wants to be in relationship with Jesus needs to meet him in the Bible!

Where and when do you read or learn about the Bible? Check off ✓ all the places below that fit.

- 1. I read the Bible each morning when I wake up.
- 2. We read and talk about the Bible at school.
- 3. In our home we like to read the Bible as part of the grace for our supper meal.
- 4. We have a copy of the Bible in our car or van to read whenever we get a chance.
- 5. I read the Bible whenever I am trying to figure out what to do with a problem in my life.
- 6. We read the Bible together every night before we go to sleep.
- 7. We have a Bible in our living room and every now and then we pick it up and read it.
- 8. I have my own Bible and I use post-it notes or bookmarks to keep track of what I've read.
- 9. I hear the Bible read at church every Sunday.
- 10. I go to Vacation Bible School in the summer to learn more about the Bible.



# Jesus Reads the Bible

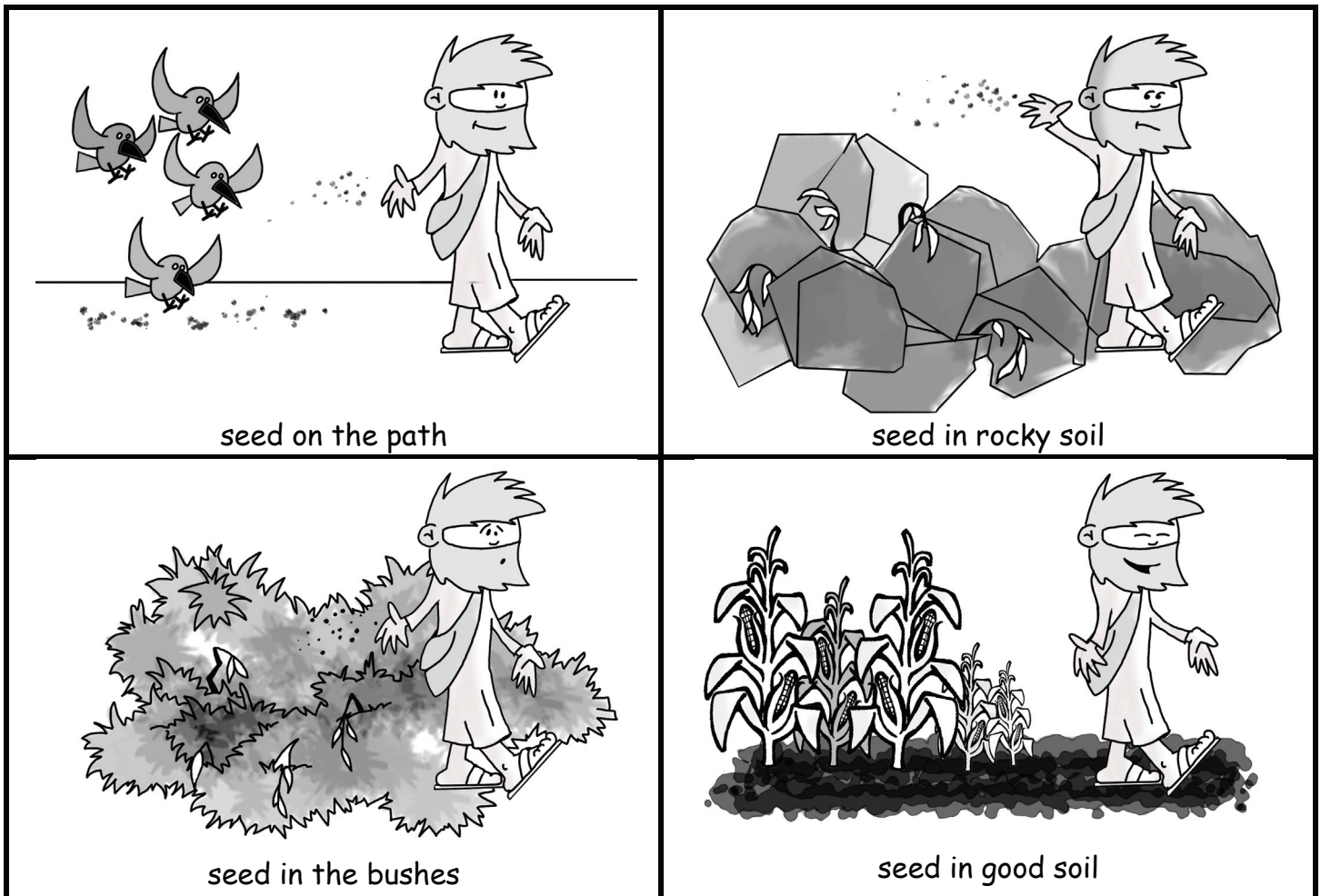
The Bible was an important part of Jesus' life. As a young Jewish boy Jesus would have attended classes to learn about the Bible. And it was part of his family's life.

The first time we hear about Jesus and the Bible is in the Gospel of Luke:

Then Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath he went as usual to the Synagogue. He stood up to read the scriptures and was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor." (Luke 4:16-18)

Do you remember Jesus' parable of the Sower? If you don't remember, open your Bible and read Luke 8:4-8. In that story Jesus is trying to help his listeners see and understand that we need to open our hearts and minds to hear God's word in our lives.

**What kind of soil are you?** Circle the picture below that best describes how God's word is growing in your heart.



# Reading the Bible

Do you have friends or cousins that you like a lot? Do you think you know them well? How did you get to know them? Did you hang out with them a lot, listen to their stories, and pay attention to what they liked and disliked?

One of the important ways that we get to know about God is to read the Bible. Reading the Bible helps us to build our relationship with Jesus and learn how to best love God and our neighbors. Reading the Bible and living the Bible work together—it's not enough just to read about how to live, we must live that way too!

Pretend that you have just been hired by a top advertising firm to create an advertisement to promote the reading of the Bible to your friends and family. The one condition is that you must create an acronym (see the example below) using the word "Scripture" as your advertisement.

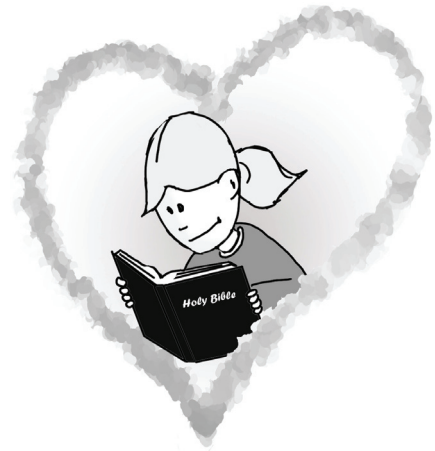
Here's an example of an advertising acronym for **LOVE**:

**L**ife is empty without someone to share it with!

**L**Ove is like oxygen, without it you can't survive!

**F**ore**V**er will God love us!

**E**veryone needs to feel loved and to give love



What words can you make from the letters in **SCRIPTURE** that would help convince your peers that reading the Bible is important?

S \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_

R \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_

P \_\_\_\_\_

T \_\_\_\_\_

U \_\_\_\_\_

R \_\_\_\_\_

E \_\_\_\_\_

# Try It — Reading the Bible

The best way to begin reading the Bible, is to begin reading it! But where do you start? Grab your Bible, and try this Bible scavenger hunt! Find the Bible passage and answer the question.

**Example:** Gospel of Matthew (3:13): Where did John the Baptist baptize?  
Answer: The River Jordan

1. Gospel of Luke (2:4): Where was Jesus born?

---

2. Gospel of John (2:9): What was one of Jesus' first miracles?

---

3. Gospel of John (11:3): Which friend of Jesus got sick and died?

---

4. Gospel of Mark (3:14): How many apostles did Jesus choose?

---

5. Gospel of Matthew (8:23): Jesus calms a what?

---

6. Gospel of Matthew (17:3): Who was Jesus talking to on the mountain when he was transfigured?

---

7. Gospel of Luke (9:10-17): How many people did Jesus feed?

---

8. Gospel of Luke (11:27-28): What is true happiness?

---

(Answers: 1) Luke 2:4 - Bethlehem, 2) John 2:9 - water to wine, 3) John 11:3 - Lazarus, 4) Mark 3:14 - 12,  
5) Matthew 8:23 - a storm, 6) Mathew 17:3 - Moses and Elijah, 7) Luke 9:10-17 - 5000,  
8) Luke 11:27-28 - those who hear the Word of God and obey it)

# Try It — Reading Gospel Stories

## Stories about Jesus' Life

- ⊙ Birth of Jesus Matthew 1:18 - 2:12
- ⊙ Baptism of Jesus Mark 1:9-11
- ⊙ Peter's Declaration about Jesus Luke 9:18-20
- ⊙ Transfiguration of Jesus Mark 9:2-13
- ⊙ Judas' Betrayal of Jesus Luke 22:1-53
- ⊙ The Last Supper Mark 14:12-26
- ⊙ Jesus Washes his Disciples' Feet John 13:1-17
- ⊙ The Crucifixion of Jesus Luke 23:26-49
- ⊙ The Resurrection of Jesus Matthew 28:1-10

## Healings and Miracles of Jesus

- ⊙ Feeding Five Thousand Matthew 14:13-21
- ⊙ Walking on Water Matthew 14:22-33
- ⊙ Healing the Paralytic Mark 2:1-12
- ⊙ Healing blind Bartimaeus Mark 10:46-52
- ⊙ Raising the Widow's Son Luke 7:11-17
- ⊙ Healing an Epileptic Boy Luke 9:38-42
- ⊙ Turning Water into Wine John 2:1-11
- ⊙ Raising Lazarus John 11:1-44

## Stories and Teachings of Jesus

- ⊙ The Beatitudes Matthew 5:1-12
- ⊙ The Treasure and Pearl Matthew 13:44-46
- ⊙ Two or Three Gathered Matthew 18:20
- ⊙ The Unforgiving Servant Matthew 18:23-35
- ⊙ What You Do for the Least Important Matthew 25: 31-46
- ⊙ Jesus and Children Mark 10:13-16
- ⊙ The Greatest Commandment Luke 10:25-28
- ⊙ The Good Samaritan Luke 10:30-37
- ⊙ The Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32
- ⊙ The Rich Man and Lazarus Luke 16:19-31
- ⊙ Persistent Widow Luke 18:2-8
- ⊙ Jesus, the Bread of Life John 6:25-59
- ⊙ The Good Shepherd John 10:1-18
- ⊙ Vine and Branches John 15:1-17