

A photograph of a person's hands resting on an open Bible. The hands are positioned in the lower half of the frame, with fingers slightly spread. The Bible is open, showing its pages and spine. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light. A teal rectangular box is overlaid on the upper half of the image, containing the title text in a yellow, serif font.

# PRACTICAL TIPS: HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

# What Is the Bible?

- The Bible is a collection of 66 books written by over 40 authors spanning 1,500 years. It contains stories, history, poetry, and prophecy from different people living in different places and times.
- The Bible can be divided up into two main sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament consists of 39 books that center around God's dealings with His people in the Old Covenant.
- The New Testament consists of 27 books that center around God's dealings with His people through Jesus Christ and the New Covenant He established.

# Why Is the Bible Important?

- The Bible is not an ordinary book. It is the Word of God. When you read it, you are reading something that has been inspired by God Himself.
- In 2 Timothy 3:16–17, the Apostle Paul says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”
- This means that the Bible is not just words written by men, but the very words of God. As such, it has tremendous power to change our lives and bring us closer to God.
- Most importantly, the Bible reveals Jesus to us. It tells us of His life and death, and how He defeated death for us so that we may have eternal life. We can't learn about the forgiveness of sins or new life in God through any other source.
- When we look at the creation, we can see God's power and might. But only in the Bible do we learn of His love for us. Only in the Bible do we hear of Jesus' sacrifice.

# Choosing a Bible Translation

- In one sense, it doesn't matter which translation you choose. The important thing is to read the Bible and spend time with God.
- However, each translation has different strengths and weaknesses. Which one you choose will depend on your purpose for reading it and which translation best suits your needs.
- For instance, some translations are more literal in nature, meaning that they aim to mirror the original language of the Bible as closely as possible.
- On the other hand, if you are looking for something that is easier to read and understand, then you may prefer a translation like the New International Version.
- Additionally, there are some Bibles that aren't technically translations. These translations are considered to be paraphrases.
- No matter which translation you choose, remember that the important thing is to spend time in God's Word and let Him speak to you. That's why it's important to find a Bible translation that works for you.

# How to Read the Bible

- We should approach the Bible with humility and reverence. We're not just reading an ordinary book. We're reading the words of God and we should treat the Bible as such.

- It's a good idea to pray before we read the Bible so we can ask God to help guide us. God can open our hearts and minds to what He has for us through His Word.
- We should also approach the Bible with an attitude of faith. In Hebrews 11:6, it says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
- In other words, we must approach the Bible expecting to find something from God. It's also essential to have an attitude of obedience when we read the Bible. We must be willing to obey what God tells us through His Word.

## Understand the Context

- When reading the Bible, context is crucially important. We must take into account who wrote the verse, to whom it was written, and what was happening at the time.
- The more we understand our background knowledge, the more likely we are to be able to accurately interpret and apply what we read in the Bible. This is why it's important that Christian readers take their time to become familiar with Biblical books, authors, characters, and places mentioned in the Bible.
- In order to properly understand the Bible, we must be aware of its context and carefully consider what it says in its original language or culture.

## Know the Biblical Genre

- Knowing the genre of the book of the Bible you're reading is as important as knowing the context. The genre is the type of writing or literature that it is.
- For example, some books are historical accounts, others are prophetic, and still others are poetic. Each one requires a different approach depending on how we interpret them.
- Each genre also has its own rules for understanding figurative language, symbols, and typology (a literary device used in the Bible to point us toward future events).

## Focus on Jesus

- The entire story of the Bible culminates with Jesus Christ. He is its main character, and all of Scripture points to Him. When Jesus was on the road to Emmaus, He explained to the two disciples about Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets.
- Understanding this is key to properly interpreting the Bible. When you are reading a passage, ask yourself:
  - What does it say about Jesus?
  - How does it point to him as our Savior?
- Answering these questions will help you understand the Bible better. Every time you read Scripture, focus on Him and His character.

## Determine the Original Audience

- The original audience matters when it comes to interpreting Scripture. We cannot just apply everything we read to our own lives without considering who it was originally intended for. We must understand what the writer of the book wanted his audience to understand.
- In addition, we must understand the culture and context of the original audience. Some passages of Scripture are challenging to interpret without this knowledge.

When you read a passage, ask yourself:

- Who is this written to?
- What does it mean in the context of its original audience?
- How do I apply it to my life today?

## Read the Bible Front to Back

- At some point, you should read the Bible from start to finish. This will help you understand the big story of the Bible and see how each part fits into the broader narrative.
- You could say that the Old Testament is Jesus foreshadowed, and the New Testament is Jesus revealed. When you read the Bible front to back, this becomes very clear.

## Read Groups of Scripture

- Within the canon of Scripture, there are certain books that naturally group together. For example, the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are all known as the Major Prophets.
- Reading the books within each group helps you understand them better. You can see how one book builds on another and how they all contribute to the larger message of the Bible. Themes will start to emerge and you'll start connecting things.

## Mark Up Your Bible

- One of the best ways to gain a better understanding of the Bible is to read with a pen or pencil in hand and make notes in your Bible. Make notes in the margins, underline passages, or draw arrows to connect related ideas.
- By marking up your Bible you'll be actively engaging with it. You'll start to see connections between different parts of Scripture and how they relate to one another.

## Write Down Your Observations

- In conjunction with marking up your Bible, you should also write down your observations and thoughts. Writing allows you to process ideas, reflect on what you've read, and remember key points.
- Write down the questions you have, the insights that come to mind, or things that God speaks to you during your time in His Word.
- You can also write out prayers that come to your mind as you read Scripture.

## Identify a Theme in Each Section You Read

- Within sections of Scripture, you'll find themes. Some may be more obvious than others. But, if you read with intentionality, you'll start to recognize how the themes change from one book or section of books to the next.
- These themes are usually connected in some way and will help guide your understanding of what's being said. They also provide insight into God's character and how His plans are being fulfilled.

## Apply What You Have Read

- All the Bible reading in the world does you no good if you don't apply what you read. To apply the Bible means to take what you've read and live it out.
- In James 1:22 it says: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."
- Living out what you read is essential for understanding God's word better. As you read Scripture ask yourself how can I live this out in my life?

## Use a Study Bible

- A study Bible can be a great tool when it comes to reading the Bible. Essentially, a study Bible is a Bible that includes notes about the passages surrounding each verse. This can be especially helpful for those who are new to reading the Bible or need some extra insight.
- Many study Bibles will provide historical context, explain difficult words and phrases, or offer commentary on various books and sections of Scripture.

## Listen to the Bible

- If you want to change things up, listening to the Bible is just as effective as reading it. In fact, taking in the Bible in a different way than normal can give you insights you wouldn't get if you were reading it.
- Many websites, apps, and podcasts offer audio recordings of the Bible. You can listen to it while you're doing chores around the house, walking or jogging outside, or in whatever way best fits your lifestyle.

## Reread Passages

- Don't be afraid to go back and reread passages that are particularly meaningful or difficult for you. Oftentimes, rereading the same passages multiple times will result in you seeing something new each time.
- When rereading, take note of what stands out to you. Consider if there are any keywords you want to look up. Think about the way a passage can be applied in your own life.

## Final Thoughts

- The Bible is a book that will change your life. It is a living and active book. In Hebrews 4:12, it says, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
- When we open up our hearts and minds to reading the Bible, God will use it to transform us and shape us into who He wants us to be. As you seek Him through reading the Bible, ask for His guidance and understanding as you do so.

This E-Book was gifted to Mike's Blog to use as a resource. Please consider supporting by donating to Mike's Blog and Iron Sharpens Iron Ministries. Thank you from:

[www.transformationalmarketingservices.com](http://www.transformationalmarketingservices.com) in support of Mike's Blog.