

Further Steps – Week 5 – Learning from the Bible

| Connect and review | Notes |
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| <p>Last week we looked at becoming a disciple. Today we are going to look at the most wonderful tool we have to help us in that journey – the Bible!</p> <p><i>Question:</i> what has your experience been like with the Bible so far? Do you find you can engage with it or is it a challenge?</p> | |
| Inspire and engage | |
| <p>1. <u>What the Bible is For.</u></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> 2nd Timothy 3 verse 16-17.</p> <p><i>Comment:</i> The Bible can be thought of as the Christian's handbook to life. It tells us about God, Jesus, the human problem and God's solution, among other things. Another name for the Bible is <i>The Scriptures</i>, meaning 'writings'. Others will refer to it as <i>The Word</i>.</p> <p>2. <u>What the Bible is.</u></p> <p>a) <u>Physically.</u></p> <p><i>Comment:</i> A collection of 66 writings of various sorts written over the course of some 4,000 years by about 40 authors. There are two sections: <i>The Old Testament</i>, that were written before the coming of Christ, and <i>The New Testament</i>, dealing with the days of Christ and beyond. (For a list of the types of literature it contains see online at http://www.learn-your-bible.org.uk/understanding.html). There are many English translations (or 'versions') of the Bible, appealing to different language styles, so you can choose which style works best for you.</p> <p>b) <u>Spiritually.</u></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> 2nd Peter 1 verses 20-21.</p> <p><i>Comment:</i> Christians believe that the authors were inspired by God to write what they did (which is the meaning of 'God-breathed' in some translations of 2nd Timothy 3 verse 16). Therefore it is often called "The Word of God." Readers are frequently aware of the Spirit of God revealing something to them as they read, though only rarely do they hear an actual voice.</p> <p><i>Question:</i> If you are reading the Bible and something stands out very clearly as if it were written to you personally, what can you do with that?</p> <p>3. <u>How to use the Bible to best advantage.</u></p> <p>(<i>Note:</i> It is generally not good practice to refer to individual Bible verses in isolation from their context, as it can easily lead to misinterpretation. The use of this method in these Sessions is because of pressure of time and care has been taken to ensure they have been accurately applied.)</p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Psalm 119:9-11.</p> <p><i>Comment 1:</i> <u>Read a portion daily.</u> There is a lot to learn and new insights emerge at almost every reading.</p> <p><i>Comment 2:</i> <u>Study it intelligently and prayerfully.</u> Hurried, cursory readings will not do! You need to understand what you are reading and see how it applies to your life. It is important to interpret what you read according to the type of literature you are reading, for example you would not interpret a passage of poetry the same way as you would a passage of history.</p> <p><i>Question 2:</i> Psalm 51 verse 10 runs "Create in me a clean heart, O God." What does this piece of poetry convey to you?</p> <p><i>Comment 3:</i> <u>Meditate devotedly.</u> Meditation is thinking carefully about what you have read, turning each phrase or word over in your mind to get the most out of it, praying that God will reveal something to you. If you are sincere and unrushed, He will!</p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Joshua 1 verse 8.</p> <p><i>Question 3:</i> There is a promise to Joshua in this verse, subject to three conditions. What are they?</p> | |

Explore and apply

Resources to help you.

Bible reading plans. These guide you to read portions in a certain order, so that you can read the whole Bible over a set period without getting bogged down in the more difficult passages. Some plans re-arrange the Bible in a particular logical order.

Bible reading notes. These suggest Bible passage to read each day plus a short commentary to help you understand or apply the passage.

Concordances. These are indexes of Bible words, to help you find what the Bible says on a subject, or to find a passage you can partially remember but have forgotten where to find it in the Bible.

Commentaries. These give information about and explanations of Bible passages.

Cross references (or chain references). These are lists of Bible references that bear a relationship to the verse you are reading. Some Bibles print short cross references down the centre of the pages.

Online resources. All of the above and more (including various translations of the Bible itself) are available online, often free of charge. Try the following, for example:

www.biblehub.org. It can be overwhelming, because of the vast amount of resources it contains, but if you persevere you need never spend money on buying printed versions.

www.blueletterbible.org is a similar resource but it is a little easier to use.

www.biblegateway.com. Bible Commentary and Concordance. Easy to use.

www.Youversion.com. Several versions of the Bible, available as a mobile phone app.

Reflect and review

Personal reflection: what is your experience of reading the Bible at the moment? What do you think would suit you going forward?

Suggested activity: try something new this week! It might be listening instead of reading, or the other way round, or really investigating a scripture that you have read and has interested you.