

How to Read the Bible

By Matt Harrison

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments on Deuteronomy 17:14-15 in the section **It's in the Book**. Then read Deuteronomy 17:14-20, which gives guidelines concerning the kings of Israel. Be prepared to report on the actions the king was supposed to avoid in verses 16-17.

Assignment Two

Read the comments on Deuteronomy 17:14-15 in the section **It's in the Book**. Then read Deuteronomy 17:14-20, which gives guidelines concerning the kings of Israel. Note especially verses 18-19. Be prepared to report on the steps the king was to take when he took the throne.

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to the writer of Psalm 119 in the section **It's in the Book**. Then read Psalm 119:9-16. Be prepared to report on the actions the psalmist took to engage with the Scripture.

Scripture to Memorize

"I have stored up Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You." Psalm 119:11

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit - by the end of this session, disciples will understand how to read the Bible and state why Bible reading is so important.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Sam was discouraged. He was not pleased with his personal times reading the Bible. He knew reading Scripture was important, but he did not know how to proceed. Have you ever had a situation like this? What counsel would you give to Sam?

Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20 out loud.

Studying the Passage

These verses speak of the day when Israel would sense the need for a king. Every nation in that day had a king, so this perceived need was understandable. The office of a king in Israel was actually predicted earlier in Scripture (see Genesis 17:6; 35:11; 49:10). Verses 14-15 offer a couple of important guidelines about the installation of a king in Israel. The verses tell us it was God's desire that He choose the king and that the king come from among the people of Israel.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on the actions the king was supposed to avoid in verses 16-17.

Discussion Question

Such actions spring from the heart and its sinful attitudes. What heart attitudes might have caused a king to act in this way?

Studying the Passage

In verses 18–19, God graciously provides steps for the king to take so he would counteract such heart attitudes.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on the steps the king was to take when he took the throne, according to Deuteronomy 17:18-19.

Discussion Question

Why does reading the Word of God help keep disciples from sinful attitudes and actions?

Studying the Passage

Verse 19. read in it all the days of his life. The Scripture was to remain with the king. His life was to be marked by faithful reading of God's Word. The passage gives many reasons for the king to faithfully read Scripture.

First, he was to read Scripture faithfully so he would **learn to fear the LORD his God**. Faithful reading of Scripture was the pathway for the king to develop a right attitude toward God. To *fear* God means to respect Him and to have reverence for Him. **all the words**. The king was to show his fear of God through obedience to all God

commanded. He was not allowed to pick and choose which aspects of the Word he wanted to obey. God called him to obey it fully, even when it was unpopular and difficult.

Verse 20. Second, he was to read Scripture faithfully so his **heart** would not be **lifted up above His brothers**. Reading Scripture would lead him to a life of humility toward others. The Word-oriented king would not use his throne as a platform of pride and injustice. Instead, he would treat others in a way that honored God.

Third, the king was to read Scripture faithfully so he would not **turn aside** from it, **to the right hand or to the left**. That is, he would read to stay on the right course in his life and in his leadership.

Fourth, as he faithfully read Scripture *and* obeyed it, he and his sons would **continue long in his kingdom**. In other words, he and his sons would succeed by having a long reign.

On Your Own

Review the reasons above in verses 19-20 for the king to faithfully read Scripture. Though these reasons were first directed toward the king of Israel, they apply to believers today. In the space below, list which reason for reading the Bible most challenges you. Also express why this particular reason challenges you. When everyone is finished, share your responses.

Discussion Question

Many Christians have a difficult time reading God's Word regularly. Why do you think this is?

Studying the Passage

In contrast to those who struggle to read God's Word regularly, the writer of Psalm 119 is an example of a person who faithfully saturated his life with Scripture. He saturated His life with it because he was convinced of its value. He approached Scripture in an engaging way.

Read Psalm 119:9-16 out loud.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now tell the group what the psalmist did to engage with the Word of God in Psalm 119:9-16.

Let the example of the psalmist encourage you in how you approach the Bible when

you read it.

Strategies for Faithful Bible Reading

In light of Deuteronomy 17:14-20 and Psalm 119:9-16, consider the following strategies for the faithful reading of Scripture. Many believers have found them to be helpful:

Keep Scripture accessible. Keep your Bible with you, not just in the car or on the shelf. You may find it helpful to download a Bible app if you have a smartphone or other electronic device. This will allow you to access Scripture at any time.

Be consistent. Choose a consistent time and place to read your Bible. Find a time and place where distractions are minimized. Many find that reading Scripture in the morning sets a positive tone for their day and allows them to focus most effectively.

Prepare yourself. Each time you read Scripture, begin with prayer. Tell Jesus that you love Him. Thank Him for His Word, confess your sin and ask Him to teach and transform you.

Pursue God. One of the main reasons to read Scripture is to get to know our Father, Son, and Holy Spirit more fully. As you read, ask yourself, “What does this passage teach me about Him?”

Pursue soundness. Be sure to read each passage in its context and try to understand the intended meaning of the author. From there, seek to understand how the passage applies to your life.

Be systematic. Choose a reading plan. You may have interest in reading through the whole Bible in a year. If you have a study Bible, it may have such a plan. You can find a plan on the Internet. You can read through a book of the Bible. If you have never read through a whole book of the Bible, begin with a shorter book such as James or 1 John. If you read a chapter of Proverbs each day, it allows you to read through the whole book in a month. Keep a journal of what God is teaching you.

Discussion Question

As a group, discuss additional strategies to read the Bible faithfully.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.

2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.

3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share that with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue, I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Life is full of pressures, struggles and temptations. We can be thankful to God for giving us His Word to direct us and sustain us. God, through His Word, helps us prepare for every life issue whether self-centeredness, pride or greed - sins He anticipated would be present in the life of Israel's king (Deuteronomy 17:16-17). Reading the Bible is the pathway to help us counteract these issues of the heart.

As we read His Word all the days of our lives, as the kings of Israel were to do, we learn to fear God and put ourselves on the path toward obedience, even when the path is unpopular and difficult (Deuteronomy 17:19). We set ourselves on the path toward humility and true success (Deuteronomy 17:20) instead of pride and ruin.

You may have been struggling to make time for the consistent reading of God's Word. Maybe you need to commit to a reading plan to be more systematic and organized in your reading. Or possibly you need to find a more suitable time or place to read. Perhaps your Bible reading has been passive and boring.

Find encouragement from the example of the psalmist in Psalm 119:9-16. Like the psalmist, read the Bible meditatively (Psalm 119:15). This means you dwell on it and think about it throughout your day.

Also like the psalmist, read the Bible with delight (Psalm 119:16). Tell Jesus you love Him. In your reading, seek Him with all of your heart and ask Him to teach you (Psalm 119:10, 12). Hide His Word in your heart and treasure it so you might stay away from sin (Psalm 119:11).

Follow-Up Question

What should be your approach to Bible reading, and why is Bible reading so important?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.