



Reading God's Word Together

This could change your life!

If you want to learn more about God, become more like Jesus, and hear His Holy Spirit speak to you more often, one of the best things you can do is read the Bible.

Sometimes when we're reading God's Word, it feels like a shot of adrenaline, as we get a dramatic revelation or are filled with sudden life. Other times it will be more like taking a daily vitamin tablet, which does us good over the years without feeling immediately dramatic. However God wants to speak to us and move in us, let's believe that He will, and do all we can to make this happen.

Get set

We've created a plan for reading the Bible that can take you through the whole of the New Testament in a year, and the Old Testament over three years. You can take it at whatever pace you want, slower or faster; the vital thing is to be reading God's Word regularly, a lifelong, life-giving habit.

We're using a slightly different order of books to what is usually published in our Bibles. For the Old Testament we've arranged things chronologically:

- Part 1 starts with creation, humanity's fall into sin, God choosing a family to be His miraculous people of hope for the world, and that family becoming a kingdom, Israel.
- Part 2 will be about what happened to that kingdom: its successes under Kings David and Solomon followed by its sin, division and eventual exile from the land as punishment. We will also read the wisdom literature God's people produced, and the prophets who spoke during this time.
- In Part 3, the story of the kingdom is reiterated and we find out what happened during the exile and how God brought His people back into the promised land. Along with these narratives, there are prophetic books from this era too.

For the New Testament, the gospels are spread throughout the year, followed by letters arranged in thematic groups (this idea comes from *The Books of the Bible*, published by Hodder & Stoughton):

- Luke's writings and Paul's letters in (probably) chronological order.
- Matthew's gospel and letters to Jewish believers.
- Mark's gospel and letters to Roman believers.
- John's gospel and his other writings.

The best way to ensure that you read the Bible is to make it a habit, and good habits happen by making a plan. Think about when in the day you could stop everything else and spend ten minutes or more with God and His word, and try

to keep this as an appointment. You might need help from people you live with to make this happen; you may have to come up with a different kind of rhythm, if work patterns or other non-negotiable life factors mean you can't select a fixed time.

We strongly encourage you to get a printed copy of the Bible so that you can read it without the distraction of using your phone! At King's, we usually read from the English Standard Version or New International Version, both of which are available in a variety of editions including:

- Study Bibles which have resources to help you understand what you're reading.
- Journaling Bibles with space for you to write and draw alongside the text.
- Reader's Bibles which feel more like most other books you read, i.e. the text is in a single column and there are no verse and chapter numbers, or headings.

Get started

When the time comes to read God's Word, turn away from all other distractions, put your phone on silent and out of sight.

Then, focus on God. Pray that He would open your eyes to see wonderful things in His word (Psalm 119:18), and give you ears to hear what He is saying (Matthew 11:15).

Now, read carefully – just the text to start with, rather than any study tools printed in your Bible. If you have time, read through for a second time, then look at the study tools.

Follow this with thinking and praying. Ask questions to help with this:

- What does this tell me about God: His nature, His character, what He has done and is doing?
- What does this mean for me: do I need to praise, repent, give thanks, tell others, pray, make a change in my life?

Writing or drawing may help you stay engaged in conversation with God. If a certain truth about Him, or a word or phrase or idea or person has grabbed your attention, stay on that. Explore what you're thinking, savour what God is saying or showing you, speak with Him about it. The point isn't to have understood and learnt everything possible but to have heard or seen something, and to have responded to God.

Get connected

Reading the Bible by yourself is an excellent thing to do, but it's even better to encourage and learn from others as you read through the same books together.

Small group meetings and messaging groups can be great places to do this, and a Running Partners group is perfect. You can use these contexts to give and receive help, to get clarity on what you think God has said or shown you, and encourage each other to keep going.

These are the kind of questions that can start good discussions:

- What have you learned about God: His nature, His character, what He has done and is doing?
- What has the reading meant for you: have you needed to praise, repent, give thanks, tell others, pray, make a change in your life?
- Has an idea, person, event, phrase stuck with you? What do you think God might be saying to you through that?
- What have you found most wonderful?
- What have you found most difficult?
- Which resources have you found helpful for introducing a book or explaining parts you've found difficult to understand?
- Are there any practical things you can do to keep developing the habit of reading?

Get help

Reading the Bible can be challenging. As well as our natural weaknesses, some things are too deep for us to truly comprehend (Psalm 139:6), some are difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:16), and many trouble us because our thoughts are not aligned with God's (Isaiah 55:8). Please don't give up: all of us experience this and it can be at these times that we learn most effectively.

Here are some things you can do when this happens:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you.
- Speak to a Christian friend or church leader.
- Explore the videos, articles and podcasts we've gathered together to introduce you to each book of the Bible at <https://tinyurl.com/bible-help>
- Use the tools provided in a study Bible.

To go a bit deeper in your studies, consider a one-volume Bible commentary such as the *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, *Africa Bible Commentary*, or *South Asia Bible Commentary*.

BibleProject.com has a helpful series of videos on "How to read the Bible", and these are some books we like which help explain what the Bible is and how to read and understand it:

- *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* and *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, both by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart.
- *Grasping God's Word, Fourth Edition* by J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays.
- *Women of The Word* by Jen Wilkin (which is good for women and men).

BeThinking.org has lots of resources about the Bible and how reliable it is. Plenty of excellent books have been written to give you confidence that the Bible really is God's word to us, such as:

- *Why Trust The Bible?* by Amy Orr-Ewing

- *Can We Trust The Gospels?* by Peter J. Williams
- *Unbreakable* by Andrew Wilson

The more you read the Bible, the more you will learn about God, and the more you will see His big story and learn the plotlines and themes in it. This will help you to understand what's happening in the daily passages you're reading. It can only happen over time, so keep persevering.

Reading Plan for Old Testament, part 1: Beginnings

The story begins with creation, then humanity's fall into sin, God choosing a family to be His miraculous people of hope for the world, and that family becoming a kingdom in the promised land, Israel.

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

1 Samuel

Reading Plan for Old Testament, part 2: Kingdom

Israel's successes under Kings David and Solomon are eclipsed by sin, division, and eventually exile from the land as punishment. This part also includes the wisdom literature produced by God's people, and the prophets who spoke during this time.

2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Solomon

Job

Isaiah

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Reading Plan for Old Testament, part 3: Exile

The story of the kingdom is reiterated and we find out what happened during the exile and how God brought His people back into the promised land. Along with these narratives, there are prophetic books from this era too.

1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Ezekiel

Daniel

Esther

Ezra

Haggai

Zechariah

Nehemiah

Malachi

Reading Plan for New Testament: Fulfilment

400 years after the last events of the Old Testament, Jesus comes to earth to fulfil all of God's plans. Following His death, resurrection and ascension, the church is born. Finally, the Revelation shows us how what began in Genesis 1 will come to an end, and God's eternal purposes will be realised.

Luke	Matthew
Acts	Hebrews
1 Thessalonians	James
2 Thessalonians	
1 Corinthians	Mark
2 Corinthians	1 Peter
Galatians	2 Peter
Romans	Jude
Colossians	
Ephesians	John
Philemon	1 John
Philippians	2 John
1 Timothy	3 John
Titus	Revelation
2 Timothy	

Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

Psalm 1:1-2

