



READING:
PRACTICE
THE
PRACTICE



ISCOVERY
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

There are many ways to practice reading Scripture. The Bible is an amazing library of 66 books, spanning thousands of years of history, utilizing the stories, accounts, and writings of many different people.

There is no end to the exploration of this incredible text.

In this guide you will find three ways to Practice Reading that are very helpful for us as a community. Feel free to try out each one, but as you do, our challenge and invitation is to pick one, especially one that may be new, and to commit to it for a few months.

Spend a good amount of time getting to know this particular way of reading Scripture. It's like a drill in sports: you need to do the drill for a while before you have the skill down.

And then, don't keep this to yourself! Find 1-2 other people who want to try this way of reading Scripture and do it together. Compare notes, share what you are learning and experiencing. We must "eat this book" with our family!

At the end of the guide you will find a variety of resources that are useful for further exploration of the good gift of God's Word.

Have fun!

***I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.
11 I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.
12 Praise be to you, Lord;
teach me your decrees.
13 With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.
14 I rejoice in following your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.
15 I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.
16 I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word. Psalm 119:10-16***

Method: Inductive Study

The inductive method is rooted in the idea of the letting a text or story in Scripture “speak for itself.” It is a deep dive into what the text actually says, what it might mean, and how we can live out the truth we find there.

This is a great method for starting out your Reading Practice journey, especially if you have not read much of the Bible before.

An excellent place to begin is with the stories about Jesus.

For the sake of this example, let's use Luke 10:25-37 (the Good Samaritan).

- **Step 1: Observe.** Begin by simply reading through the story 3-4 times. Don't worry about understanding, or drawing any conclusions, just pay attention to the words, the flow of the story, etc.
 - Big Question of Step 1: **What does it say?**
 - In a journal write down 20 observations. Use the classic reporter questions (Who, What, When, Where, Why). Look for repeated words or phrases. Are there repetitions or clusters of ideas?
 - After you write down 20 observations, take a break, do something else for a few minutes, and then come back and try to write down 10 more. Even if it feels simple, straightforward and obvious, write it down!
- **Step 2: Interpret.** Begin this step by writing down 10 questions. Put yourself into the story: how would you feel if you were there?
 - Big Question of Step 2: **What does it mean?**
 - Note: it is really easy to get lost in step 2. In many stories and texts there can be layers of meaning. Start with the simplest possibility and then move to the complex.
 - Second note: this is also where community is so helpful. If you get stuck or confused, text a friend. Have a conversation and work through some of your questions together.
 - Finally, try to name the Big Idea of the passage. In 1-3 sentences what is this teaching, story, poem, scene about? What does this passage say about God? About us?
- **Step 3: Apply.** This is where our Reading really becomes Practice. Now that you have named the Big Idea, what do YOU need to do in response?
 - Big Question of Step 3: **What does it mean to me?**
 - Do I need to talk to someone, or share something with someone else? Do I need to change a behavior or examine a belief?

After Step 3, spend some time in prayer or contemplation considering what you've read, and inviting God to keep speaking to you.

Method: Chronological Bible Reading

Perhaps you have had the desire to read through the entirety of the Bible. You start in Genesis (chapter 1, so to speak) and at first, everything is going great. The stories are amazing and interesting, wild and violent things are happening, and God is speaking to people and showing up in all sorts of interesting ways.

And then, all of a sudden, there are just so many instructions on how to build a tent (Exodus 28-40). Or you get lost in a sea of rules about things not to eat, or how to clean “emissions”, or how to kill certain animals as a sacrifice (Leviticus) . Or, you make it through all of that, only to be confronted with long lists of names you can’t pronounce! (Numbers)

Most people give up at this point.

As a result, we have many people who have been formed by reading the same small number of passages over and over again. Or, we approach Scripture as a buffet we pick and choose from, not a big story to be swept into.

Chronological Bible reading doesn’t solve all these issues (there’s still lists of names and various rules and regulations). However, chronological reading, reading Scripture as an unfolding story, can help keep us from getting bogged down in the minutiae, and gain a great appreciation of the larger scope of God’s redemptive work.

A short summary of THE story we’ve used before is this:
Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration.

For our Practice a slightly better articulation is as follows:

1. **God Establishes the Kingdom: Creation**
2. **Rebellion in the Kingdom: Fall**
3. **The King Chooses Israel: Redemption Initiated**
4. **The Coming of the King: Redemption Accomplished**
5. **Spreading the News of the King: The Mission of the Church**
6. **The Return of the King: Redemption Completed**

There are a number of great reading plans available (see resources below). Discovery has one on our App that can be completed in 6 months.

We want to challenge you to use this reading plan and as you read take note of where you are in the story, using the 6 movements above. As you move into a new book or section think about what phase of the story you are in? How does that clarify or help you understand the events or actions of that part of the story?

Keep a log, or journal, of your reading, and as always try to do this with someone else. Compare notes and check in on what you are learning and experiencing!

Method: Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina, or Divine Reading, is a method of contemplating and praying Scripture. It is very different from common “Bible Studies” and is meant to create space for God to speak to us through the words of Scripture.

There are several variations of Lectio, but for our introductory purposes, we encourage you to try this with several Psalms, using the following format.

1. **Prepare:** Choose a text (Psalm 1 is a great place to start!). Find a quiet space, and carve out 15-30 minutes of time where you can be uninterrupted. Turn off your phone, slow your breathing, and pay attention to how you feel as you begin. After a few moments to slow down, acknowledge God's presence and invite the Spirit to speak: *Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart and mind to listen to Your word.*
2. **Lectio:** Read through the passage several times. Read through it out loud at least once. (Listening to an audio version of the Bible also works well with Lectio). Read slowly and prayerfully, paying attention and noticing what stands out. What word or phrase grabs you? Listen and receive the word God wants to speak to you.
3. **Meditatio:** Having read through the text a few times sit with the word or phrase that sparked for you. Repeat the word over a few times. Ponder this word, allowing it to speak to your thoughts, hopes, memories, and desires.
4. **Oratio:** In prayer we respond to God's word. Scripture becomes a two way conversation! What do you want to say to the Lord in response to the Word spoken to you? Enter into this loving conversation with God.
5. **Contemplatio:** Close with a few moments of simply sitting and resting in God's presence. Enjoy the peace of a wordless, quiet rest in God. Remember that contemplation is not your action or doing, rather it is allowing God to act in you.

Having moved through this process, journal as an act of memorializing: a way to name what God spoke so that you can return to it later and remember what He said. Carry this good news with you throughout your day.

Finally, share what you are hearing! Process your *lectio* with a companion or friend who can walk with you and cheer you on as you listen to God's voice through Scripture.

Resources:

There are a couple of resources within our community that you can utilize any time:

1. The Chronological Reading Plan on our App
2. Discovery Groups as a communal space to process Scripture (groups are always open)
3. The Lectio Group that will run for 5 weeks starting in February

Two other helpful Discovery tools:

- Pastor Steve's teaching on Scripture from the "Our Kind Of Crazy" series:
<https://www.discoverydavis.org/sermons/sermon/2019-11-10/the-good-news-of-scripture>
- Two sessions of 2020's Summer School of Theology covered Scripture, if you would like the links to those sessions email info@discoverydavis.org.

General Books About Scripture:

- The Drama of Scripture: Craig Bartholomew and Michale Goheen
- Reading the Bible for the Love of God: Alan Reynolds
- Reading While Black: Esau McCaully
- Inspired: Rachel Held Evans
- How Not to Read the Bible: Dan Kimball
- Scripture and the Authority of God: N.T. Wright
- The Blue Parakeet: Scot McKnight
- Eat This Book: Eugene Peterson

Resources for Inductive Bible Reading:

- InterVarsity Christian Fellowship has done tremendous work over the years with Inductive studies. Their webpage is a great jumping off point for those practicing this practice:
<https://intervarsity.org/bible-study>

Resources for Chronological Bible Reading:

- As mentioned, Discovery has a version on the App, but there are a variety of ways to do this, including a daily format that gets you through the whole Bible in one year. Various Apps and Sites have these plans mapped out (logos, bible gateway, Biblehub, etc).
- The NIV website has a good article on the background and helpfulness of chronological reading:
<https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/read-bible-chronologically/>

Resources for Lectio Divina:

- Join the Lectio group in February!
- Books:
 - Opening to God: David Benner
 - Meeting God in Scripture: Jan Johnson
- Lectio Divina Prayer Bible by the Common English Bible

Finally, **the Bible Project** (website, podcast, and app) is loaded with great resources, and super helpful for those of us who struggle with reading and learn better visually or aurally (auditory).