



WHY READ THE BIBLE?

The Bible is the living and active Word of God (Hebrews 4:12). And the history of the Church and the lives of millions of Christians testify to this reality. The Bible isn't merely a history book or religious textbook...it's a story. The Bible unfolds God's true story of redemption through the saving work of Jesus Christ. Your story, the story of history, are all part of this grander story of God.

We want to invite you to join our community in reading the Bible daily because it's one of the primary means of grace that God has provided for us to have an intimate relationship with him and hear what he's speaking to us and how he's inviting us to respond.

HOW DO YOU READ THE BIBLE?

You don't read a fictional novel the same way you read an instruction manual. Your expectations in reading are set by what you're reading. The same is true with the Bible. Knowing what the Bible is and isn't will help you set the right expectations as you begin reading.

- **See the One Big Story** - The Bible isn't a history book or religious textbook simply prescribing rules for behavior. Does the Bible contain historical accounts? Yes, hundreds. Does it contain commands and instructions for how God's people are to live? Absolutely. But it's much more than *just* history or rules. It's one story with Jesus Christ as its hero. This story of redemption is still unfolding today so you should expect it to constantly intersect with your life and our world.
- **Have the Right Goal** - Your goal in reading the Scriptures is to draw near to God and cultivate an intimate relationship with him, speaking, listening and responding. As you engage him you should expect to experience greater enjoyment of him and at the same time to find greater opportunity to participate in his story of redemption individually but also with your community.
- **Prioritize It** - Reading the Bible daily will never happen without intentionality, so block off time on your calendar and guard it as you would a recurring meeting with a dear friend, your boss or your most important client. Morning is generally the best time to set aside because you have no idea what your day holds once you walk out the door.
- **Rest in the Gospel** - Remember the Scripture is a *means of grace*, not law. Reading your Bible daily isn't a test to prove how good a Christian you are. It's an opportunity to be with your God. Engaging with God through his Word is a rhythm that will be cultivated over a lifetime so don't crush yourself if you miss a day or a few, just pick up where the Reading Plan is that day.
- **Meditate on the Text** - "Do the whole reading for each day, but look for a "best thought" for each day—something you can meditate on throughout the rest of the day, perhaps a verse you can memorize, something that is particularly memorable. This way,



you are left with more than a vague feeling of what you read in the morning.” – Stephen Witmer (<http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/two-year-bible-reading-plan/>)

- **REAP** - The Austin Stone Community Church has developed a helpful method for responding to the Word as you read called **REAP**:
 - **Read** - Open your Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to teach, correct, and train you.
 - **Examine** - Spend some time reflecting. What do you see about God and man?
 - **Apply** - Apply the text to your own life. What do you need to believe?
 - **Pray** - Pray through the passage and your application, asking God to change your heart and to change your life, based on the time you've spent in God's Word.
 - Learn more here: <http://austinstone.org/resources/bible-reading-plan>
- **Read in Community** - The Bible is a communal Word, meaning its intended for the entire Christian community. Our hope for a Congregational Bible Reading Plan is to foster more engagement with God but also with one another as we share, ask, encourage and challenge each other with the Word. Life Transformation Groups within our Community Group structure are some of the best places for this type of communal engagement with the Bible to happen. Check out our website (apostlesnyc.com) to learn more about connecting with a CG and LTG near you.

MORE HELPFUL RESOURCES

- ***ESV Study Bible*** - A good Study Bible can be a great aid for helping answer questions and alleviating confusion as you read through the Bible. At Apostles Church we use the English Standard Version (ESV) translation of the Bible and recommend the ESV Study Bible for anyone. (<http://esvstudybible.org/>)
- ***Understanding God's Story, Porterbrook Network Course*** - A highly practical yet brief course walking through the foundational elements of reading, understanding and applying the Bible to life. More than simply material to read, the Porterbrook Course offers great practical application and skill building that will equip you for engaging the Bible more meaningfully. (<http://porterbrooknetwork.org/course-catalog/all/understanding-gods-story>)
- ***How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart*** - A guide to understanding the different genres of the Bible (e.g. epistles, Old Testament narratives, the Gospel accounts, parables, wisdom literature, etc.) (<http://www.amazon.com/How-Read-Bible-All-Worth/dp/0310246040>)