

Welcome to the Bible

by Steven L. Pogue

The Bible is not just for learning; it's for living. –Lawrence O. Richards

Would you like to know what God really thinks about you? Or how you should think about God? You can find out... in the Bible!

The Bible is the very personal message of the One who created the universe. Because it is God's living Word, it does more than grab your attention. It speaks to you. In a manner that's almost uncanny, the verses you read today may apply directly to your problems.

For the Word that God speaks is alive and active; it cuts more keenly than any two-edged sword: it strikes through to the place where soul and spirit meet, to the innermost intimacies of a man's being: it examines the very thoughts and motives of a man's heart (Hebrews 4:12).

The Bible explains how it was written

"For no prophecy recorded in Scripture was ever thought up by the prophet himself. It was the Holy Spirit within these godly men who gave them true messages from God" (2 Peter 1:20,21). Those verses apply specifically to the Old Testament prophecies, but the entire Bible is inspired: "All Scripture is God-breathed..." (2 Timothy 3:16).

The word inspiration literally means "God-breathed." From God's very life, His breath, came the words of the Bible. You may find other books inspiring to read because they are intellectually or emotionally moving, but they are not the very words of God. Only the Bible is.

The Bible reveals what God wants you to know about Him and about life. It contains promises: things that God says He will do for you. Here are just a few of God's promises to you:

- God will use everything in your life for good, conforming you into the image of Christ (Romans 8:28,29)
- He will always be with you (Matthew 28:20)
- He will generously give wisdom if you ask (James 1:5)
- He will supply every need in your life (Philippians 4:19)
- He already knows your needs before you ask Him (Matthew 6:32)

- His peace will superintend you through life as you pray with thankfulness (Philippians 4:4-7).

With most books, you learn best by beginning at page one. You would think that the best place to start your study of the Bible would be on page one of Genesis. After all, Genesis means "beginnings." But the Bible is not arranged in chronological order. The books of the Bible are placed in categories. You may want to follow the recommended order for reading the Bible at the end of this article. This order is designed to give you a good understanding of the major themes of Scripture and to acquaint you with much of its history.

The key to understanding the Bible is Christ

The Old Testament looks forward to His coming. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) reveal Christ's identity and mission, and the rest of the New Testament explains the implications of that new life in Christ. To understand the Old Testament, you have to begin with the New Testament.

Jesus said He came to give us life more abundantly and part of experiencing that is by knowing and following His Word. Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31)

It was as someone shared God's Word with us that we became Christians. "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." (1 Peter 1:23) And we continue to grow the same way, through His word, which He refers to as our nourishment. "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." (1 Peter 2:2,3)

All of Psalms 119 talks about the value of studying God's Word. Here are just a couple of reasons from it: "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against you." (v11) "O how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation." (v97-99) "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (v105)

Bible reading is an intellectual exercise, involving your mind. But to understand the spiritual teaching and apply it, you need the Holy Spirit's leading. As you read the Bible, pray, asking God the Holy Spirit to make plain to you what He wants you to know: "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Develop a spirit of expectancy – God wants to teach you through His Word. But don't rely on feelings. I've had some of the best times of Bible study when I decided that I would continue reading for fifteen more minutes even though the previous fifteen minutes were "boring."

If your Bible study is regular and daily, it will become a habit in your life. Find a place free from distraction. Be creative, and pick the time of day when you are most alert and able to spend time with God. Remember, you are pursuing a relationship with God and you want to be able to converse with Him. Keep a journal to record

what God teaches you. Writing helps organize your thoughts, as well as giving you something you can return to several months later.

God will honor the time you spend with Him, and you'll find yourself growing in your faith. It will be time well spent.

Recommended order of Bible reading:

- John
- 1 John
- Romans
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- Luke
- Acts
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- James
- Mark
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Genesis
- Exodus
- Joshua
- Proverbs
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel

*This article is an excerpt from Steven L. Pogue's book, **The First Year of Your Christian Life**. If you would like to purchase a copy of this book, you may do so here: www.campuscrusade.com/books.*