

Read the Bible Together



Journal

As you begin to read through the Bible, you'll need a place to reflect, write down insights, and turn your reading into praying.

Let these 4 questions guide you:

1. Who Is God? The first step is always to see **what the text is telling us about God.**

We tend to see ourselves first in the text, and to ask what the text is telling us to do, but the Bible is not about you! The Bible is not primarily an instruction manual so that you and I can live a more virtuous life; rather, the Bible is the True Story of God's work in history to rescue his people from slavery to sin and the penalty of death, restore them to friendship with himself, and secure for them an eternity of mutual enjoyment in a restored universe. That's the Story the Bible is telling, and we need to pay attention to it. **So start where the Bible starts, with God.**

2. What Has God Done? In addition to seeing what the text tells us about God, we also want to read to **see what the text tells us about the action of God.** God reveals himself in his speaking and in his acting, and we do well to pay attention to both what he says and what he does. In particular, we want to see what the text tells us about God's saving work, most importantly in and through Jesus Christ. In Luke 24, Jesus says that the whole Bible is about Himself, and in particular about the need for him to suffer and die for the sins of the world. Every story in the Bible is pointing to Jesus: his perfect life, substitutionary death, and glorious resurrection. Jesus fulfills every command, interprets every instruction, embodies all truth, brings to sinners the riches of God's gracious promises, and empowers a life of responsive obedience. **So again, before you get to questions of personal action, look for the real action of the Story: Jesus!**

3. Who Are We? **The work of God in history in Jesus Christ has created a new humanity, a new community, a new kind of people.** These are people who live by faith, trusting in the finished work of Jesus in their place, and walking life in freedom of grace, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is filled with statements about the identity and privileges of these "saved by grace" people. As you read, pay attention to these indicatives and what is said to be true of those who live by faith. God wants you to see and remember who you are through Jesus much more than he wants you busy doing good things. **There are lots of good things to do, but don't miss out on all the riches of your new identity and resources in Christ!**

4. What Should We Do? Finally, as you read and study the Bible, you'll find plenty of instructions, directions, and commands. Ultimately, they fall in two categories: **Love God and love others.** Jesus said that these two commands sum up all the commands, and whoever loves

God and loves others fulfills all the commands. But true love for God and true love for neighbor is always the outflow of a life fixated on the grace of God given in Jesus. The instructions are good, right, and true, **but only the gospel empowers** faith-filled, sacrificial, responsive obedience. As you read, listen for how the Spirit speaks to you, directs your thoughts, and leads you to action. Surrender to what the Spirit shows you, and in repentance and rejoicing, act on his directives.

COMMUNITY

The Bible is meant to be read in community. The vast majority of it was addressed not to key individuals but to the community of faith, to help shape our life together as God's people. From the beginning of the Story, God intended to have a people, a human family, on whom He would heap the abundance of his goodness. His delightful purpose in creating humanity was that we'd live under his fountain of grace such that our lives would rebound to the praise of his glory. In Jesus Christ, God has finally made that purpose a reality in us, the church, the community of blood-bought sinner-saints.

Therefore, as we read the Bible together this year, we're encouraging everyone to have 1-2 other people of the same gender with whom you can commit to read, reflect, repent, rejoice, and respond to the Bible together. We call this a **DNA Group**, which stands for **Discipleship, Nurture, and Act**. As you meet together weekly, you'll do so around these 3 aspects of being a grace-empowered follower of Jesus.

Discipleship (Head): What did you read? What did you learn? What insights were revealed regarding the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? What energized you? What puzzled you?

Nurture (Heart): What sin was revealed and what does repentance entail? What grace was revealed and how are you rejoicing in your Savior? How is the Bible reading encouraging you toward community and mission?

Act (Hands): What will you do in light of what you've read and how the Spirit is leading you? In what ways will you support, encourage, and pray for one another? Who else will you share this good news with this week?