

the Journey of Discipleship

Lesson 4: The Word of God

INTRODUCTION:

One of the most important ways that we grow in our relationship with God is through reading, studying, and meditating on the Bible or Scripture. In this study, you will consider how to view the Bible as God's Word, how to listen to God's voice through it, and finally how to be doers of his word.

1. *What is the Bible to you?*

2. *Have you ever experienced God speaking to you through the Bible? If yes, please explain. If not, why do you think or feel that way?*

As a new or young believer, you may have questions about how we got the Bible, what are all the books of the Bible, and how the books are organized. Although this is not the main focus of this study, here are ten key points about how we got the Bible and a helpful chart of how the books of the Bible are organized.

How We Got the Bible: Ten Key Points (Source: *The World Christian Encyclopedia*)

1. The Bible is inspired by God (*Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21*)
2. The Bible is made up of 66 different books that were written over 1600 years (from approximately 1500 BC to AD 100) by more than 40 kings, prophets, leaders, and followers of Jesus. The Old Testament has 39 books (written approximately 1500-400 BC). The New Testament has 27 books (written approximately AD 45-100). The Hebrew Bible has the same text as the English Bible's Old Testament, but divides and arranges it differently.
3. The Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew, with some Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek.
4. The books of the Bible were collected and arranged and recognized as inspired sacred authority by councils of rabbis and councils of church leaders based on careful guidelines.
5. Before the printing press was invented, the Bible was copied by hand. The Bible was copied very accurately, in many cases by special scribes who developed intricate methods of counting words and letters to insure that no errors had been made.
6. The Bible was the first book ever printed on the printing press with moveable type (Gutenberg Press, 1455, Latin Bible).
7. There is much evidence that the Bible we have today is remarkably true to the original writings. Of the thousands of copies made by hand before 1500, more than 5,300 Greek manuscripts from the New Testament alone still exist today. The text of the Bible is better preserved than the writings of Plato and Aristotle.

8. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed the astonishing reliability of some of the copies of the Old Testament made over the years. Although some spelling variations exist, no variation affects basic Bible doctrines.
9. As the Bible was carried to other countries, it was translated into the common language of the people by scholars who wanted others to know God's Word. Today there are still 2,000 groups with no Bible in their own language.
10. By AD 200, the Bible was translated into seven languages; by 500, 13 languages; by 900, 17 languages; by 1400, 28 languages; by 1800, 57 languages; by 1900, 537 languages; by 1980, 1,100 languages; by 2006, 2,426 languages have some portions of the Scripture.

Books of the Bible

Old Testament – 39 Books			New Testament – 27 Books		
LAW (5)	POETRY (5)		History Life of Jesus (4)	Paul's Letters to Churches (9)	Letters by Others (9)
Genesis	Job		Matthew	Romans	Hebrews
Exodus	Psalms		Mark	1 Corinthians	James
Leviticus	Proverbs	MINOR PROPHETS (12)	Luke	2 Corinthians	1 Peter
Numbers	Ecclesiastes	Hosea	John	Galatians	2 Peter
Deuteronomy	Song of Solomon (Songs)	Joel		Ephesians	1 John
		Amos	History The Church (1)	Philippians	2 John
HISTORY (12)		Obadiah	Acts	Colossians	3 John
Joshua		Jonah		1 Thessalonians	Jude
Judges		Micah		2 Thessalonians	Revelation
Ruth		Nahum			
1 Samuel	MAJOR PROPHETS (5)	Habakkuk		Paul's Letters to Individuals (4)	
2 Samuel	Isaiah	Zephaniah		1 Timothy	
1 Kings	Jeremiah	Haggai		2 Timothy	
2 Kings	Lamentations	Zechariah		Titus	
1 Chronicles	Ezekiel	Malachi		Philemon	
2 Chronicles	Daniel				
Ezra					
Nehemiah					
Esther					

What does it mean that the Bible is God's Word and that it is inspired? How should that understanding affect the way that we approach the Bible? What are some practical ways to study God's Word and to hear his voice through it? These are the questions that we want to address in this study.

READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

READ HEBREWS 4:12

²For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

3. *How is the Bible different than any other Book?*

4. *What does it mean that it is living and active?*

5. *What are some of the purposes of God's Word?*

6. *How does it thoroughly equip us for every good work?*

GOING DEEPER:

As we approach God's word, we need to remember that we are not reading for merely facts or knowledge, but we are reading and studying the Bible to hear God's voice –to understand his heart, character, thoughts, ways, and to ultimately grow in love, trust and obedience to him.

Secondly when reading his word, we need to avoid the temptation to jump to quick conclusions or to be frustrated with some passages that are more difficult to understand. They may require further study, meditation, or you to ask God to bring more revelation. We also must avoid the temptation to quickly jump to application –what is God asking me to do? Or how should I apply this in my life? Important as it is to obey the word of God, it is equally important just to *know* him and experience him through the Word. When we learn something new about God –his character or his thoughts towards us, it may be appropriate just to praise him and give thanks to him just for who he is.

Finally, when God does ask us to take a step of faith and obedience, it is important to obey and follow him. Scripture warns us that if we are merely hearer of the words and not doer of the word –we are deceiving ourselves.

Read James 1:22-25

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

7. In what ways might we be deceiving ourselves if we are not a “doer” of the word?
8. How is God’s word like a “mirror”? What does it mean for you to look intently into it?
9. How does God’s word bring freedom and cause us to be blessed in what we do?

LIVING IT OUT

There are different ways you can read the Bible. You can read it to study and understand different passages or books of the Bible. You can also read it in a devotional style. As you are starting out, we suggest using a devotional style, recording your thoughts and insights in a journal. This will help you connect with God in a more personal way and later will help you look back and see how you’ve grown. Start by asking the Holy Spirit to come and be with you as you read. Ask Him to give you insight into what you are reading. Read a small passage of Scripture in one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John). Read it several times slowly. Try picturing what is happening or even putting yourself into one of the characters in the story. What might it be like? What catches your attention? How might the people have felt? Spend some time thinking deeply about what you read. Then when you are ready ask the Holy Spirit to help you answer the following questions:

1. What does this passage teach me about the character of God?
2. What does this passage teach me about being a disciple?
3. What does God want me to obey today?

Read John 10:14-18 (Jesus the Good Shepherd) this week for your personal study. Follow the suggestions above to study the passage devotionally. Get a journal if you don’t have one. Journal your response to the three questions above in regards to this passage.

MOVING FORWARD

10. As you continue to grow as a disciple, ask God how he might want you to grow in his word for this season: Is it to commit to reading through the entire Bible? Is it to start a journal? Is it to do a study through Scripture on an area for personal growth (i.e., patience, prayer, etc.)? Or is there a step of faith based upon his word to you that he is asking you to take?