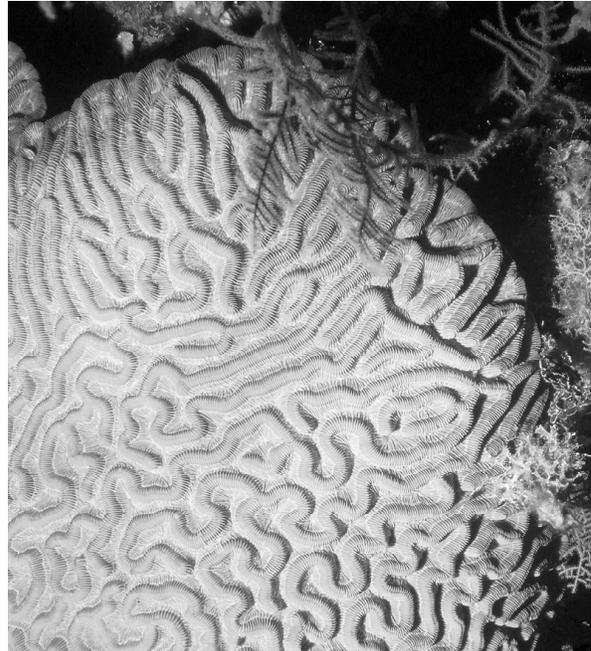


Session 1

Where to Read in Your Bible

- ◆ If reading the Bible is fairly new to you, you might want to start with books in the New Testament. (Some, however, might find the Gospel of Matthew to be difficult reading, so begin with Mark or John.)
- ◆ Finish reading all of one book before starting another.
- ◆ Perhaps the two most difficult books in the Bible are Leviticus and Revelation.
- ◆ Instead of reading the Gospels consecutively, intersperse them with other books for variety.
- ◆ When you are ready to begin reading in the Old Testament, you might pick one of the following books: Joshua, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Genesis, Daniel. Some of these books have difficult parts, so just skim through those sections.



How to Mark Your Bible As You Read

Felt-tip pens *cannot* be used on the thin paper on which most Bibles are printed. We suggest you obtain an inexpensive paperback Bible with heavier paper for your reading and marking. You can use a ballpoint or a fine felt-tip pen to mark your Bible with the following symbols:

1. Brackets []
2. Short diagonal lead-ins \
3. Parallel diagonal lines in the margin //
4. Circles ○
5. Vertical lines in the margin |
6. Underlining _____

In addition, you may use a felt-tip “highlighter” (usually yellow) to mark *through* the words you want to draw attention to instead of underlining them. The “highlighter” will leave a background of colour light enough to allow you to read the words.

You may choose to use all of these markings as you read, you may choose to use only one or two of your favorite ones, or you may choose to make up some of your own.

In the following four passages of Scripture, from three different versions, marking is illustrated.

Isaiah 11:1-7 (Living Bible)

The Royal Line of David will be cut off, chopped down like a tree; but from the stump will grow a Shoot – yes, a new Branch from the old root.
²And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel and might; the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.
³His delight will be obedience to the Lord. He will not judge by appearance, false evidence, or hearsay, ⁴but will defend the poor and the exploited. He will rule against the wicked who oppress them. ⁵For he will be clothed with fairness and with truth.
⁶In that day the wolf and the lamb will lie down together, and the leopard and goats will be at peace. Calves and fat cattle will be safe among lions, and a little child shall lead them all. ⁷The cows will graze among bears; cubs and calves will lie down together, and lions will eat grass like the cows.

Luke 5:15-17 (Living Bible)

¹⁵Now the report of his power spread even faster and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases. ¹⁶But he often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.
¹⁷One day while he was teaching, some Jewish religious leaders and teachers of the Law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.) And the Lord's healing power was upon him.

1 Kings 12:3-13 (Berkeley)

³When Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel arrived, they addressed Rehoboam, saying, ⁴“Your father made our yoke unbearable. ⁵Now lighten the unbearable service of your father and the heavy yoke he laid upon us, and we will serve you.” ⁶He responded, “Give me three more days, then return to me.”
When the people left, ⁷Rehoboam conferred with the elders who had stood by Solomon when he was still alive, saying, “How would you advise me to reply to the people?” ⁸They advised him, ⁹“If you will be a servant to this people now and serve them and reply to them with kind words, they will

always be your servants.” ¹⁰But he rejected the advice which the elders gave him. Then he conferred with the young men who grew up with him and who stood by him. ¹¹“What do you advise us to say to this people who petitioned me, ‘Make lighter the yoke your father laid upon us?’”
¹²The young men who grew up with him replied, “Thus you must say to this people who petitioned you, ‘Your father made heavy our yoke, do make it lighter for us,’ you must say to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. ¹³Now my father has laid upon you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father flogged you with whips, I will flog you with scorpions.’”
¹⁴Jeroboam and all the people came back on the third day to Rehoboam as the king had directed, saying, “Return to me on the third day.” ¹⁵The king spoke harshly to the people, disregarding the advice given him by the elders.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-7 (Amplified)

Paul, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy to the assembly (church) of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah: ¹Grace (spiritual blessing and divine favor) to you and heart peace. ²We are ever giving thanks to God for all of you, continually mentioning [you when engaged] in our prayers, ³recalling unceasingly before our God and Father your work energized by faith and service motivated by love, and unwavering hope in (the return of) our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah.
⁴[O] brethren beloved by God, we recognize and know that He has selected (chosen) you; ⁵for our [preaching of the] glad tidings (the Gospel) came to you not only in word, but also in (its own inherent) power and in the Holy Spirit, and with great conviction and absolute certainty (on our part). You know what kind of men we proved [ourselves] to be among you for your good. ⁶And you [set yourselves to] become imitators of us and [through us] of the Lord Himself, for you welcomed our message in [spite of the] much persecution, with joy [inspired] of the Holy Spirit; ⁷so that you [thus] became a pattern to all the believers – those who adhere to, trust in and rely on Christ Jesus – in Macedonia and Achaia [most of Greece].

Reading and Marking Exercise

For your reading and marking exercise, you will now work on *Romans 12* from *The Living Bible*. As you do this exercise, you will want to (1) pray that God will speak to you from His Word, (2) think through the passage, and (3) mark the thoughts that impress you most. After you have read this passage, you will have an opportunity later to share one or two things that you marked.

Romans 12 (Living Bible)

And so, dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy – the kind He can accept. When you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask? ²Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you.

³As God's messenger I give each of you God's warning: Be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you. ^{4,5}Just as there are many parts to our bodies, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of it, and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other, and each needs all the others.

⁶God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, then prophesy whenever you can – as often as your faith is strong enough to receive a message from God. ⁷If your gift is that of serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, do a good job of teaching. ⁸If you are a preacher, see to it that your sermons are strong and helpful. If God has given you money, be generous in helping oth-

ers with it. If God has given you administrative ability and put you in charge of the work of others, take the responsibility seriously. Those who offer comfort to the sorrowing should do so with Christian cheer.

⁹Don't just pretend that you love others: really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of good. ¹⁰Love each other with brotherly affection and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹Never be lazy in your work but serve the Lord enthusiastically.

¹²Be glad for all God is planning for you. Be patient in trouble, and prayerful always. ¹³When God's children are in need, you be the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night.

¹⁴If someone mistreats you because you are a Christian, don't curse him; pray that God will bless him. ¹⁵When others are happy, be happy with them. If they are sad, share their sorrow. ¹⁶Work happily together. Don't try to act big. Don't try to get into the good graces of important people, but enjoy the company of ordinary folks. And don't think you know it all!

¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honest clear through. ¹⁸Don't quarrel with anyone. Be at peace with everyone, just as much as possible.

¹⁹Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God, for He has said that He will repay those who deserve it. [Don't take the law into your own hands.]

²⁰Instead, feed your enemy if he is hungry. If he is thirsty give him something to drink and you will be "heaping coals of fire on his head." In other words, he will feel ashamed of himself for what he has done to you. ²¹Don't let evil get the upper hand but conquer evil by doing good.