

Learn to Read the Bible Effectively

Distance Learning Programme

Session 4



SESSION 4

Section 1

Tips on reading	Page 1
Fundamental principles of effective reading	1
Bible reading plans	1
Preparation	2
How to approach reading the Bible	2
How to read	3
Optional assignment 5	4

Section 2

Overview of the books of the Bible (Part 2)	5
Genesis	6
Exodus	7
Leviticus	8
Numbers	8
Deuteronomy	9
Joshua	10
Judges	10
Optional assignment 6	10
Bible Companion	11

It is more important to read daily than to achieve the goal of reading all of the three portions each day. If you can only read one portion, be consistent in which portion you read. If you get behind, don't worry about catching up. Just pick up on the readings for that day and keep going every day.



Read Psalm 119 v 97

Preparation

- Allocate time. Have a regular spot in your daily routine for reading. For most people mornings are better than evenings.
- Select a translation, bearing in mind our comments in Session 1.
- Be comfortable. Reading should be enjoyable and you should look forward to reading. So pick a comfortable setting.
- Sitting at a desk for reading can be more productive and comfortable.

How to approach reading the Bible

If you are to gain what you can from Bible study, you need to approach it with the right attitudes. You need to be open to new ideas. If you approach all ideas with a “fortress mentality” – thinking that your main job is to prove what you already think the Bible says – your understanding will have little chance of growing.

The Bible is a book of strength that has withstood all kinds of attacks during its history. As in all other areas of study, Bible students build upon and re-evaluate the work of earlier students. You need not fear examining new ideas and evaluating them carefully in the light of all the teachings of the Bible.

You need to be willing to think about what you are learning, and to consider how you can apply it in your life. To do this, it is usually helpful to share your ideas and interpretations with other Bible students for discussion and evaluation. We can learn from each other. This is why we encourage you to discuss Bible topics with your tutor.

Bible study is stimulating and life-changing. Study of the Bible can affect your life as no other study can. You will experience a new satisfaction as you learn to make your own judgements based on firm principles, and the Bible will become more alive and powerful in your life. Remember, you are intended to understand this remarkable book and to meet God in its pages.

The all important thing is attitude.

When you read the Bible, have an open mind – let it teach you.

How to read

- Read aloud. This may seem ridiculous if you are alone, but the human mind is amazing. While you read, you can also be planning what you're going to do next, and finish a chapter wondering what you just read. Reading aloud doesn't solve the problem but it helps the mind to focus.
- Listen for "echoes".
- Ask yourself questions . Here are some useful ones:-

(You don't need to ask all these questions about every passage; quite often one will spark off an interesting line of thought.)

- a. What is the main subject?
- b. Who are the main people?
- c. What does it say about God or Christ?
- d. What is the central lesson?
- e. What example is there to follow?
- f. What in this chapter do I most need to apply to my life today?
- g. Are there cross-references that can be used to develop the theme of the passage or help my understanding?
- h. Are there any words I should look up to clarify a definition?

- Be patient. Don't try to read too much at once.
- Use other translations

It can help to understand a passage if you look at another translation.

Again bear in mind which translations follow the original text the closest.

- Use study tools

We shall look at these in greater detail in Session 5.

OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT 5

Effective Bible reading

Using the "Bible Companion" reading table, pick one of the readings for today and ask one or two of the questions on page 3, trying to find answers which satisfy you.

Abraham to David

The time period covered in this session is about 1,000 years long.

GENESIS

Gen. 12 v 1 to 3 Abram is the beginning of the nation of Israel.

Gen. 17 v 1 to 8 His name was originally “Abram” which means “exalted father”, and was changed by God to “Abraham”, which means “father of a multitude”.

Gen. 21 v 1 to 7 He had a son whose name was Isaac, who in turn had a son whose name
Gen. 25 v 21 to 27 was Jacob.

Gen. 32 v 27 & 28 Jacob’s name was changed to Israel, which means “prince with God”.

Gen. 35 v 22 to 26 Jacob had twelve sons, whose children became the twelve tribes of Israel.
The word “tribe” really means a family. We see the twelve families of
Israel, or the “children of Israel”, developing.

These large tribes, which had various experiences and developments,
grew together into a great nation.

Gen. 37 v 4 Joseph was not very well liked. His jealous brothers sold him into Egypt.
Gen. 37 v 12 to 36

Gen. 41 v 1 to 44 By a turn of events Joseph became a ruler and brought all his family into
Gen. 46 v 1 to 27 Egypt.

EXODUS

One of the Pharaohs

- Ex. 1 v 1 to 14 Jacob's family grew in Egypt until a new Pharaoh, worried by their numbers, placed the Israelites into slavery.
- Ex. 3 v 1 to 10 They were in Egypt for over 200 years until a great deliverer came. That deliverer was Moses. Moses called out the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt. They were promised that they would be given a fertile land.
- Ex. 14 v 21 to 31 They were brought through the Red Sea and they were taken into the wilderness to be tested. The map on page 9 shows their wanderings in the wilderness.
- Ex. 16 v 2 to 31 They also received a bread-like substance called "manna" in the wilderness for their food. Like most people who have to eat a very limited diet, they quickly tired of it. Israel cried out for meat and God gave them birds called "quail".

Quail

- Ex. 19 v 1
Ex. 20 v 1 to 17 After seeing the miracle of the Red Sea parting and the destruction of Pharaoh's army, they came to Sinai to hear the voice of God. They were driven back in incredible fear as the mountain shook and trumpets sounded and the mountain glowed. In the wilderness, they received the commandments which became known as the Law of Moses.

Ex. 21 to 31 It was much more than the Ten Commandments that they received. In fact, they obtained a complete code of laws that directed their worship and life in every way.

Ex.32 v 1 to 8 We see in this chapter that they soon forgot God. Despite various spectacular miracles, such as the parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's army, within forty days they made a golden calf and called it their god.

The golden calf was modelled on one of the Egyptian gods. This bronze Apis bull was found at Ashkelon in Israel

LEVITICUS

Leviticus gives detail of how the people were to worship God and order their lives.

NUMBERS

Entering the Promised Land.

Num.13 v 1 to 33 Just as they approached the land to enter in, they sent out twelve spies to check out the land. Two remained faithful to the cause and said they could take the land, but ten said that the "giants" in the land were too great for them to conquer and that they should not go in.

Other nations existed in the land. That should not have surprised Israel as it was a fertile and productive land. But the people feared and even attempted to stone the two faithful spies who urged them to go in.

In effect they said "God parted the Red Sea and killed the Egyptians and fed us in the wilderness, but God can't save us now!"

JOSHUA

Joshua 1 to 4 Joshua led Israel into the promised land.

Joshua 5 to 12 The conquest of the promised land.

Joshua 13 to 21 Division of the promised land.

JUDGES

Judges 2 v 7 to 23 Israel did eventually establish itself in the land, though sometimes tenuously. During this time, they were directed by a group of leaders known as the Judges. This became known as the period of the Judges.

Judges 21 v 25 This whole time period is marked by people who degenerated in behaviour, and it makes for graphic reading. The period is concluded with the unfortunate summary that “everyone did what was right in his own eyes!”

1 SAMUEL

1 Samuel 8 v 1 to 22 Eventually, tired of the corrupt practices that went on, the people desired a king and chose Saul. They did not choose him for his character, but because he “looked the part”.

1 Samuel 15 v 10 to 16 v 13: He did start out as a reasonable king, but degenerated rapidly, and so another king, a man called David, was selected.

We shall continue our overview in Session 6.

OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT 6

Overview of the books of the Bible

Read some or all of the references we have given and make your own summary. If you do this using a loose-leaf folder you can eventually fill in the gaps and have your own summary of the Bible story, which will be very helpful in understanding it yourself.

The Bible Companion

January				
1	Genesis	1,2	Psalms	1,2
2		3,4		3-5
3		5,6		6-8
4		7,8		9,10
5		9,10		11-13
6		11,12		14-16
7		13,14		17
8		15,16		18
9		17,18		19-21
10		19		22
11		20,21		23-25
12		22,23		26-28
13		24		29,30
14		25,26		31
15		27		32
16		28,29		33
17		30		34
18		31		35
19		32,33		36
20		34,35		37
21		36		38
22		37		39,40
23		38		41-43
24		39,40		44
25		41		45
26		42,43		46-48
27		44,45		49
28		46,47	Romans	1,2
29		48-50		3,4
30	Exodus	1,2		5,6
31		3,4		7,8
				9

February				
1	Exodus	5,6	Psalms	58,59
2		7,8		60,61
3		9		62,63
4		10		64,65
5		11,12		66,67
6		13,14		68
7		15		69
8		16		70,71
9		17,18		72
10		19,20		73
11		21		74
12		22		75,76
13		23		77
14		24,25		78
15		26		79,80
16		27		81,82
17		28		83,84
18		29		85,86
19		30		87,88
20		31,32		89
21		33,34		90,91
22		35		92,93
23		36		94,95
24		37		96-99
25		38		100,101
26		39,40		102
27	Leviticus	1,2		103
28		3,4		104
			Mark	1
				2
				3
				4
				5
				6
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The Bible Companion

July				
1	1 Samuel	13	Isaiah	56,57
2		14		58
3		15		59
4		16		60
5		17		61
6		18		62
7		19		63
8		20		64
9		21,22		65
10		23		66
11		24	Jeremiah	1
12		25		2
13		26,27		3
14		28		4
15		29,30		5
16		31		6
17	2 Samuel	1		7
18		2		8
19		3		9
20		4,5		10
21		6		11
22		7		12
23		8,9		13
24		10		14
25		11		15
26		12		16
27		13		17
28		14		18
29		15		19
30		16		20
31		17		21
				Revelation 21,22
				Matthew 1,2
				3,4
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			Romans	1,2
				3,4
				5,6
				7,8

August				
1	2 Samuel	18	Jeremiah	22
2		19		23
3		20,20		24
4		22		25
5		23		26
6		24		27
7	1 Kings	1		28
8		2		29
9		3		30
10		4,5		31
11		6		32
12		7		33
13		8		34
14		9		35
15		10		36
16		11		37
17		12		38
18		13		39
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21		16		42
22		17		43
23		18		44
24		19		45,46
25		20		47
26		21		48
27		22		49
28	2 Kings	1,2		50
29		3		51
30		4		52
31		5	Lamentations	1
				Romans 9
				10,11
				12
				13,14
				15,16
			Mark	1
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				1 Corinthians 1,2
				3
				4,5
				6
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				8,9
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				11
				12,13
				14

September				
1	2 Kings	6	Lamentations	2
2		7		3
3		8		4
4		9		5
5		10	Ezekiel	1
6		11,12		2
7		13		3
8		14		4
9		15		5
10		16		6
11		17		7
12		18		8
13		19		9
14		20		10
15		21		11
16		22,23		12
17		24,25		13
18	1 Chronicles	1		14
19		2		15
20		3		16
21		4		17
22		5		18
23		6		19
24		7		20
25		8		21
26		9		22
27		10		23
28		11		24
29		12		25
30		13,14		26
				1 Corinthians 15
				16
				2 Corinthians 1,2
				3,4
				5-7
				8,9
				10,11
				12,13
			Luke	1
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				13,14
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October				
1	1 Chronicles	15	Ezekiel	27
2		16		28
3		17		29
4		18,19		30
5		20,21		31
6		22		32
7		23		33
8		24,25		34
9		26		35
10		27		36
11		28		37
12		29		38
13	2 Chronicles	1,2		39
14		3,4		40
15		5,6		41
16		7		42
17		8		43
18		9		44
19		10,11		45
20		12,13		46
21		14,15		47
22		16,17		48
23		18,19	Daniel	1
24		20		2
25		21,22		3
26		23		4
27		24		5
28		25		6
29		26,27		7
30		28		8
31		29		9
				Luke 24
				Galatians 1,2
				3,4
				5,6
				Ephesians 1,2
				3,4
				5,6
				Philippians 1,2
				3,4
				John 1
				2,3
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				9,10
				11
				12
				13,14
				15,16
				17,18
				19
				20,21
				Acts 1
				2
				3,4
				5,6
				7
				8
				9

November				
1	2 Chronicles	30	Daniel	10
2		31		11
3		32		12
4		33	Hosea	1
5		34		2
6		35		3
7		36		4
8	Ezra	1,2		5
9		3,4		6
10		5,6		7
11		7		8
12		8		9
13		9		10
14		10		11
15	Nehemiah	1,2		12
16		3		13
17		4		14
18		5,6	Joel	1
19		7		2
20		8		3
21		9	Amos	1
22		10		2
23		11		3
24		12		4
25		13		5
26	Esther	1		6
27		2		7
28		3,4		8
29		5,6		9
30		7,8	Obadiah	
				Acts 10
				11,12
				13
				14,15
				16,17
				18,19
				20
				21,22
				23,24
				25,26
				27
				28
				Colossians 1
				2
				3,4
				1 Thess. 1,2
				3,4
				5
				2 Thess. 1,2
				3
				1 Timothy 1-3
				4,5
				6
				2 Timothy 1
				2
				3,4
				Titus 1-3
				Philemon
				Hebrews 1,2
				3-5

December				
1	Esther	9,10	Jonah	1
2				2,3
3	Job	1,2		4
4		3,4		5
5		5	Micah	1
6		6,7		2
7		8		3,4
8		9		5
9		10		6
10		11		7
11		12	Nahum	1,2
12		13		3
13		14	Habakkuk	1
14		15		2
15		16,17		3-5
16		18,19		1,2
17		20	Zephaniah	1
18		21		2
19		22		3,4
20		23,24	Haggai	1,2
21		25-27	Zechariah	1
22		28		2,3
23		29,30		4,5
24		31,32		6,7
25		33		8
26		34		9
27		35,36		10
28		37		11
29		38		12
30		39	Malachi	1,2
31		40		3
		41,42		4
				2 & 3 John
				Jude
				Revelation 1,2
				3,4
				5,6
				7-9
				10,11
				12,13
				14
				15,16
				17,18
				19,20
				21,22