



HOW TO READ
THE BIBLE
EVERY DAY AND
UNDERSTAND IT

Mónica E. Mastronardi

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the Bible every
day and learn
from it

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CHURCH OF THE
NAZARENE

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1. WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO READ THE BIBLE?

For millions of Christians, the Bible is the most important book in the world. Why is it so special? Here are some reasons:

- a. The Bible explains the origin of all things and the purpose of their existence.
- b. The Bible shows humans the path (Jesus) which leads to an encounter with God.
- c. The Bible has transformed the lives of millions.
- d. The accuracy of the historical events narrated in the Bible has been confirmed in archaeological findings.
- e. The Bible's promises and prophecies have been fulfilled through history and in the lives of the children of God.
- f. Jesus believed in the Word (the Bible), studied it, lived to fulfill it, obeyed it completely and taught it.

- g. Through the Bible, God speaks to the reader in a very personal way.
- h. The Bible nurtures the believer's spirit with its words.
- i. The Bible shows the path to a holy life.
- j. The Bible comforts in times of sorrow.
- k. The Bible provides a guide in moments of decision-making.
- l. The Bible shows how great God's love is towards man.

All of this and much more is what the Bible is for man. An example of how difficult it is for a person to express the value of the Bible is found in Psalms 119. This is the longest chapter in the Bible: 176 verses! It's primary objective is to demonstrate the great treasure that can be found in the Word of God for all mankind.

2. THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE AND THEIR MAIN DIVISIONS.

The Bible is a complete collection of books ... a library. Its name, which comes from the Greek, means “small books”.

The 66 books that make up the Bible were written separately and collected into the Old Testament (39 book written before Jesus) and in the New Testament (27 books written after Jesus).

Within the 40 authors of the Bible you can find kings, prophets, shepherds, artisans, fishermen, soldiers, poets, doctors, and many other faithful men which were inspired and guided by the Spirit of God. Between some of them there is more than 1,500 years of difference, however the consistency and the unity among these authors, the majority of them never having met, is extraordinary. There is no other book like the Bible, which, having been inspired by God, is the only one that could really satisfy all human needs.

The books of the Bible have been divided into chapters, and each chapter into verses, for ease of study and comparison between its different parts. For example, when we say John 8:3, this means: the book of John, chapter 8, verse 3 will be read. (see the illustrations on the next page)

When a larger or smaller portion of a verse is cited, punctuation symbols are used to indicate the extension of the reference. These symbols are used according to the chart on page 10.

The names of the books of the Bible, as well as abbreviations that may be used, will appear on the contents page, which you can find on the first pages of a Bible. In the beginning, it is very useful to use the contents page to locate the page number of the book you are looking for.

8¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all gathered around him, and **VERSE** ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” ⁶

⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing

BIBLE REFERENCE READING CHART

Reference	Book	Chapter	Verses
Mt. 5:3-6	Mathew	5	3 - 6
Mk. 7:3,5	Mark	7	3 and 5
Jn. 4:3f	John	4	3 & following vs
Lk. 5:9ff	Luke	5	9 & following vss
Gn. 32:30 -33:9	Genesis	32	from verse 30 to chapt. 33 vrs. 9

3. THE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN BY THE WILL AND MANDATE OF GOD.

The first books of the Bible were written by the mandate of God to Moses. In Deuteronomy 6:6-9, it says that God ordered the people to spread the Word that was received through all means possible, including writing.

Moses also collected the stories of the past history of his people (Israel) in the book of Genesis.

How was Moses able to know these facts so precisely?

Archaeological discoveries have proven that since the time of Abraham (some 2000 years before Christ), there were schools that taught how to read and write. Prior to Abraham, these stories were told orally from parent to child. The Archaeological discoveries have proven that the Hebrews have known

about writing since ancient times. In the book of Hebrews 9:19, it indicates that the Israelites, from ancient times, had books where they would register everything. (See Deuteronomy 27:2-8 and Joshua 8:30-32.) During those times, the writing and the materials used were very different from those used today. The Hebrew verb that is translated “writing” means “splitting or sink” and it refers to the method of punching marks or wedges into clay tablets (wedge like writing was the origin of the letters of the alphabet). These engravings were grouped into 600 different forms, forming different signs. Then the tablets were dried and hardened like stone. The most enduring writing material that man has ever known!

The Bible was written in three original languages:

a. Hebrew: Almost all 39 books of the Old Testament were written in this language. This Semitic language was

learned by the Israelites when they came into contact with the Canaanites. By the time of Jesus, all the writings of the Old Testament had been translated to Greek.

b. Aramaic: The Language learned during the Babylonian exile. Portions of Daniel and Ezra were written in it. The Old Testament books were written over a period of more than 2,000 years. The scribe Ezra worked on the compilation of these books (457 B.C.) and this was completed by the high priest Simon the Just (300 B.C.).

Aramaic became the popular language used, and it was spoken by Jesus. Matthew writes his gospel in Aramaic, even though it was translated into Greek.

c. Greek: This was the common language used in the Roman Empire. The books of the New Testament were written in Greek.

The authors of the New Testament also received God's command to write down the things they had witnessed. An example of this is found in Revelations 1:19: *"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later."*

Today, very few people read the Bible in its original languages. Thank God that the Bible has been translated into hundreds of languages commonly used today.

These translations of the Bible are called versions. The most common English versions are the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), and the New International Version (NIV).

4. CAN SUCH AN OLD BOOK BE A SECURE GUIDE FOR CHRISTIANS OF THE 21ST CENTURY?

“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

2 Peter 1:19,21

The Apostle Paul states that all men and women can find a secure guide for their life in the Word of God, continually comparing the Word of God with a lamp that lights the path, even in the thickest darkness. The Bible has this purpose until the day the Morning Star appears, referring to the day in which Christ will come again for His people. Meanwhile, Peter teaches Christians to be alert to what the Bible teaches.

The Word of God is compared to a filter which all information that comes from the world can be filtered. When one knows the Word of God, he can

evaluate each thing through this filter to make decisions that are aligned with God's purpose for His children.

Others compare the Word of God to a lens, which enables us to discover Satan's tricks and find a secure path. Others find it similar to a compass. Others also compare it to a lighthouse which illuminates the dark sea of the world and guides the ship of our life to the secure port of eternal life.

There is a story of a captain that steered his ship in the high seas on a very dark night. Suddenly the watcher informs him of a light that he saw on the horizon. The captain sends instructions to the origin of the light, assuming it is another ship, to move, otherwise they will crash into each other. Then a message was received from the light source, that they will not move, but that his ship should be the one to change its course. The ship was very close to the light source and if a quick decision wasn't made, a crash would be inevitable. The Captain, very

worried, tries one more time to try to have the light source move by mentioning his royal rights. To his surprise, he received the following response from the light source: “No matter how many royal rights you might have, Captain, you are the one that must move because the light that you see is coming from a lighthouse.”

In this same way, the Word of God is also a firm and secure guide for all of us. It should not be adapted or modified according to our convenience. The Word of God doesn't change or justify any sinful conduct. It's the word that changes the human being, to live according to the commands of the Lord.

5. How can we be sure that the Bible is the Word of God?

2 Peter 1:21 declares *“For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”* (NIV) The Word of God was not brought to us by the will of man ... its origin is divine. The Holy Spirit was the one who moved the prophets, through inspiration.

***Article of Faith IV of the Church of the Nazarene declares: We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.

Not everyone understands inspiration in the same way. Some believe that some

parts of the Bible are more inspired than others.

But to confirm that God is the author of the Bible is something totally different. The Bible doesn't contain information about man's effort to know God, like in other religions. It is how God reveals himself to humanity through human instruments. Sergio Franco explains the intention of God for the Bible with these words: "He does not want to be a hidden or unknown being." Dr. W.T. Purkiser adds "faith is the human response to the revelation of God."

It is marvelous how the Holy Spirit worked to guide each one of the writers. The Spirit gave them the capability to understand the will of God, and the ability to communicate it to their contemporaries in their own words.

6. How important were the scriptures for Jesus?

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus declares the purpose of his arrival: *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”* What did Jesus come to fulfill? The verb that Jesus used translates to “abolish,” which was used in that time to point out how a house or tent was destroyed or undone.

Jesus clearly explains that he did not come to put an end to what God had already established through the mouths of his servants, since the time of Moses; but on the contrary, he declares that he came to fulfill God’s promises. “Fulfill” in its original language means to “fill to the top”, that means that Jesus’ goal was to:

- a. Complete the work that his father had assigned him which had been prophesied by his servants.

- b. Fulfill the promise that God had made to man that he would send a savior.
- c. Fulfill the requirements of the holy and perfect lamb, the only one that could pay the price for our salvation.
- d. Put into practice the law: Jesus not only fulfilled the ceremonial law, such as rituals established by the law, but he also maintained the moral law becoming our perfect example.

In different opportunities, Jesus declared that what he was doing was fulfilling the Scriptures. In this way, Jesus was subject to the words written by men in the Old Testament.

The disciples didn't understand the suffering that Jesus had to go through because they didn't understand what the prophets had anticipated. (Luke 24:25, 27, 44)

Is it possible that their lack of understanding was because they had

not studied the scriptures carefully; so they were unable to compare the scriptures to the events in which they were living?

If Jesus had not been subjected to fulfill what was written in the Old Testament about him, he would have shattered the value of the entire Word of God.

Through his incarnation, Christ reveals the importance of living according to the Word of God, which many of his contemporaries had neglected. Like Jesus, Christians should respect and submit to the Word of God.

In Matthew 5:19, Jesus affirms that it is important to obey the entire Word of God: *“Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*

Jesus understood the fundamental importance of following the commandments of the Word by living according to its teachings. The Lord applied the Word in all areas of his personal life as we can see in the following examples of Scripture:

- a. In times of testing and temptation: Matthew 4:1-11.
- b. In his prayers: In the prayer of John 17:8, Jesus feels pleased with how he was able to complete his responsibilities by sharing the Word and living it.
- c. In training of the disciples: Luke 24:27-32.
- d. In preaching and personal evangelism: John 3:14-15 and Matthew 11:7-11.
- e. To refute wrong teachings: Matthew 22:23-33.

7. How to read the Bible in three simple steps

When the Lord saved you, he made you into a new creation so that you can grow in a new life with God. No one can grow if they are not properly fed. All healthy babies need food to grow naturally. The Word is the daily food for every Christian. The following three simple steps will help you read the Bible each day:

Step # 1: Prepare yourself for a special time with God!

The apostle Paul calls Timothy to be responsible in the study of the Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

The Word of God should not be read as if we were reading a newspaper or any other reading material. We should approach it with respect and expectation. Every time we open the pages of the Bible, we are opening a channel of communication with God. We should not

treat it as if it was an informative book, but as the living Word, that always has something new and fresh for us.

Reading of the Bible is daily food for each Christian: *“Jesus answered, ‘It is written: ‘ “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” ’ ”* (Matthew 4:4) However, for the Word to be effective, it must first enter into our minds by reading it.

Reading the Bible should be the most important daily task for a Christian. You should dedicate the best of your time to it, time in which your mind can concentrate only on it without being rushed or distracted. You should choose a place where it will be quiet and comfortable, away from distractions.

The Holy Spirit is the one who makes the connection between our hearts and the Word. That is why, before reading, you should pray asking the Holy Spirit for direction so that he will guide you towards the truth.

Step #2: Savor the Word!

Simply reading the Word of God doesn't nourish the believer, but reflecting on it does. Many people know the contents of the Bible like they know a history book. However, "to savor" and "to taste" are 2 different things.

In order to read better, you should seek to understand the words. Having a dictionary on hand is very helpful. Sometimes reading the passage once or twice helps with comprehension. Reading the text in different versions can broaden the range of meaning.

On some occasions it can be helpful to use a Bible Commentary or Biblical Dictionary. Also, you can ask a mature believer about those passages that you may find more difficult to understand.

You don't have to read long portions of a text, although it is recommended to study daily portions of the same book

from beginning to the end to have a better understanding, by relating what was read with the rest of the book.

On occasion you may stop on one verse and study it further, when it speaks to you in a special way.

If you are going to start to read the Bible it is recommended to start with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Then you can continue reading the book of Acts and other books from the New Testament.

The Word of God is a fountain of teachings. It not only shows the truth, it also convicts us of our mistakes. This truth will never contradict other passages of the Scripture. When savoring the Bible text we learn of its great wisdom and we grow in God's knowledge. There is still one more step so that the Word can really be effective.

Step #3: Digest the Word!

In Matthew 19:3-6, Jesus accused the Pharisees of reading, but not applying, what they read to their lives.

The Word of God not only shows us what is wrong, but also what is good in the eyes of God. The Word of God should also provoke a change in the reader's life. It becomes meat to the believer through the Holy Spirit. It is like a two-edged sword that penetrates into the deepest part of the heart where the deepest secrets and motives of the human being lay. The Bible is like the eye of God, that can see the deepest part of the hearts of men and women as if they were crystal.

It motivates change, not only understanding. It purifies the soul through obedience (1 Peter 1:22-23; John 17:17). That is why a Christian that doesn't read the Word is stagnant in his spiritual life. Not only will his knowledge stop but also his spiritual growth.

A recommendation is to keep a journal of how the Word speaks to you daily, how you put it into practice and the results you see. You can also write words, phrases and questions that you need to look up. This is a very useful way to apply the Word to your life.

8. Checklist for the daily study of the Word

1. My attitude as I approach the Scriptures:
 - Am I doing it hoping to meet with God?
 - Am I willing to obey God in every situation that the Word reveals to me today?
 - Have I prayed to ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance and understanding of the reading?
2. My understanding of the passage:
 - Have I read the Word with understanding?
 - Have I connected what I have read in this passage with other passages I've read before?
 - Have I considered the verses that surround the passage?
 - Do I understand what these words meant for the people in that time?

3. My obedience to the Word:

- Have I examined myself?
- Have I confessed the sins that the Word has exposed in my life?
- Have I asked forgiveness for those sins?
- Have I received personal promises from the Word?
- Have I found a commandment that I should obey?

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HOW TO READ THE BIBLE EVERY DAY AND UNDERSTAND IT

This book will help you in the following ways:

1. You will be able to appreciate the divine origin of the Scriptures.
2. You will be instructed as to how the Word of God was written and passed down through the ages.
3. You will learn important information about the content of the Bible so that you can value it as a guide for your new life in Christ.
4. It will teach you a simple method of reading the Word, understanding it, and applying it to your daily life.
5. In addition, you will understand the importance of daily Bible study for growth in your faith.