

How to read the Bible

Every Christian should read part of the Bible at least once every day. This is one of the many ways that God has chosen to “talk” to us.

If you can, read the same readings as you would have in Church each day.

Or you can start at the beginning of the Bible and read it through (four chapters a day of the Old Testament and one of the New Testament) and you’ll be reading the whole Bible every year.

You can follow a structured plan – Bibles often come with these as part of the book.

It is a very good idea to have some sort of commentary to help you to understand what you are reading – you can find Bible Reading notes or join a Bible Study class – all this will help you understand the Scriptures better.

People often find that it is difficult to start reading the Bible – other things get in the way. See how much Satan doesn’t want you to read it!

Remember to pray when you read the Bible.

Before you start ask God to show you what you need to hear from Him. Tell God that you are putting aside this time to be with Him and to concentrate all your thoughts on what you are going to learn.

Remember to read the Bible with Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour in mind. The Bible, taken as a whole, is all about Him. If you remember this you’ll soon start noticing the way that God the Word (Jesus) has joined Himself to the whole of human history.

Illumine our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, with the pure light of Your divine knowledge. Open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Your Gospel teachings. Implant also in us the fear of Your blessed commandments, that trampling down all fleshly desires, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing to You. For You are the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and to You we ascribe glory, together with Your Father, Who is from everlasting, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.



The Bible

READ IT!

The Bible (or Holy Scriptures)

The Bible started off by being a lot of scrolls written by many different people. They were all put into one book by the early Church. This book is in two main sections (or Testaments) and many smaller sections which are the old scrolls.

The Old Testament

There are Five Books of the Law beginning with Genesis which include the early Creation stories and about Moses. After this there are historical books which deal with the early Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Also there are “Wisdom” books like the book of Psalms. There are then the Major Prophets (like Isaiah) and Minor Prophets (like Amos).

The Protestant Bible misses out certain books (the ones originally written in Greek), the Roman Catholic has others included and the Orthodox Church recognises the most number of books (all those included in the “Septuagint”).

The New Testament.

The Gospels

This begins with the four Gospels. Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are thought to have written these books. Each Gospel has its own way of telling the story: Mark’s Gospel, for example is short, to the point and is made up of lots of stories about Jesus, His acts and teaching and miracles. Sts. Matthew and Luke seem to have used Mark’s Gospel when writing their own expanded versions. St. John is a very different work: he writes after a long lifetime of difficulties and persecution. Many people think that he was helped in this work by both Mary (Jesus’ mother - the Theotokos) and Mary Magdalene. All of the Gospels are more interested in who Jesus is and what His life, death and resurrection mean for us than in just writing a history of his life.



Acts of the Apostles

This was also written by St. Luke. It is a history of the very early Church. St. Luke tells us about the Day of Pentecost, the first Christians, the martyrdom of St. Stephen the deacon, how the first overseers, elders and deacons were appointed and about St. Paul’s conversion and what St. Paul did up to his imprisonment in Rome.

Letters

The Letters (or Epistles) were written by some of the Apostles to various people or churches. It is important to realise that the letters were often written to correct wrong teachings and wrong actions by people who were already Christian.

Revelation

Another book written by St. John. It nearly didn’t get into the Bible and is not read in Orthodox services. It is NOT for the beginner and was written for first century Christians to encourage them to continue through the persecutions.