



WHY AND HOW SHOULD I READ THE BIBLE?

The Alpha Course week 5

The Bible is the most **POPULAR**
POWERFUL
PRECIOUS book in the world

“Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (*Matthew 4:4*)

1. BRINGING REVELATION – GOD HAS SPOKEN

The Bible is a collection of books by 40+ authors over 1600 years

- It is inspired: God-breathed
- “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” (*2 Timothy 3:16*)

But what about difficulties in the Bible?

- Jesus is the interpretive key
- It’s authoritative (*2 Timothy 3:16–17*)
- Practical wisdom: guidelines for living

2. BUILDING RELATIONSHIP – GOD SPEAKS

The Bible is like a love letter from God:

- To those exploring faith (*Romans 10:17, John 20:31*)
- To those who are Christians
 - Become like Jesus (*2 Corinthians 3:18*)
 - Joy and peace in the midst of a storm (*Psalms 23:5*)
 - Guidance (*Psalms 119:105*)
 - Health/healing (*Proverbs 4:20–22*)
 - Defence against spiritual attack (*Matthew 4:1–11*)
 - Power (*Hebrews 4:12*)
 - Cleansing (*John 15:3*)

“Reading the Bible generates life. It produces change. It heals hurts. It builds character. It transforms circumstances. It imparts joy. It overcomes adversity. It defeats temptation. It infuses hope. It releases power. It cleanses the mind.”

RICK WARREN, AUTHOR AND CHURCH LEADER

3. HOW CAN WE HEAR GOD SPEAK THROUGH THE BIBLE?

- Make a plan
 - Find a time
 - Find a place (“a solitary place,” *Mark 1:35*)
- Find a pattern
 - Ask God to speak:
 - Read a short passage
 - Use Bible reading notes
 - Bible in One Year app - bibleinoneyear.org
 - Lectio 365 - 24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365
 - Ask yourself:
 - What does it say to me?
 - What does it mean to me?
 - How does it apply to me?
- Respond in prayer
- Put it into practice (*Matthew 7:24*)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION IN GROUPS

1. Has you read any of the Bible? How did you find it?
2. How do you feel about the idea of God speaking through the Bible?
3. Has anyone got any practical suggestions about how to read the Bible? Have you used Bible notes or schemes like *Bible in one Year* and *Lectio 365*?
4. Have you read anything in the Bible that has challenged an aspect of your beliefs or behaviour?



WHY DOES PAUL TAKE THE BIBLE SO SERIOUSLY?

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true; to make us realise what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. *2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT)*

Paul was steeped in the Jewish scriptures (what we call the Old Testament). He would have been taught them from a young age and became an expert in the Jewish law. But when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, everything changed (you can read this remarkable story in Acts chapter 9).

Paul realised that Jesus himself is the fulfilment of all that is in the Bible. The Old Testament comes to life when we read it through His eyes. This is exactly what Jesus himself taught: 'You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life' (*John 5:39-40 NLT*).

So by taking God's word seriously, we grasp how we can live in healthy and godly ways. We understand who God is, catch his love for us and also what he expects from his sons and daughters. And through seeing the Bible story from Genesis to Revelation, we can understand God's plans for all humanity and the real purpose of Jesus coming into the world to die and be raised back to life.

Taking time each day to read the Bible, along with praying, is the best way of knowing God in your life. That's why Paul and billions of Christians down the ages have made it a priority – it is truly lifechanging because it is God speaking to us! There are many helpful Bible reading notes, schemes and apps. Here are two for you to try:

- Lectio 365** 24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365
- Bible in One Year** bibleinoneyear.org

Let the study of the Bible become central in your life - not just so you will know it, but that you will obey it.

Billy Graham

I read my Bible every night. For me, it's really important to have the presence of God in me all the time and it gives me more confidence to know that God's plan is perfect, so I can go on the pitch and know that God has my back.

Bukayo Saka, Arsenal and England footballer



Watch this week's video at <https://vimeo.com/184825488>

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What does Paul mean by 'All Scripture is inspired by God'? If it is God's word, how does this impact how we read it?
2. The Bible claims to reveal God to us. How might Jesus help we interpret what we read? What does it mean for Jesus to be 'The Word' (John 1:1)?
3. Have you tried reading from the Bible each day? If so, what have you found helpful? What might be stopping you from doing so?
4. Has your understanding of the Bible changed following this week's Alpha? If so how, and what impact might this have on your life?

Lord Jesus, help me each day to read your living words in the Bible, to hear what you are saying to me, and to do what you ask of me. Amen.

You might like to read...

- Why Trust the Bible?** by Amy Orr-Ewing
- 30 Days** by Nicky Gumbel