



I Want To Study the Bible But...Where Do I Begin?

Remember what it was like when you were first learning how to drive?

You had to identify every button, light, and gauge in the car. And on top of that, you had to memorize all those driving rules and traffic signs. (Who even invented roundabouts, anyway?)

At first, you might've wondered how your driving instructor could've possibly expected you to memorize all that.

But soon enough, you started absorbing what you needed to know—and got to the point where you felt you could take the driver's seat for the first time.

You might have gulped nervously before shifting the car into Drive. But after driving for a little while, you started to get the feel for it.

And what had seemed so difficult before became almost second nature.



Maybe you want to start reading the Bible for yourself, but you don't know where to start. There's so much in it. It can feel intimidating or seem confusing at times.

But you know what?

We've all been there before.

Even theologians, Bible scholars, and pastors.

It's just a matter of starting.

So, just like you'll never learn how to drive if you never take the wheel, you'll never truly understand the Bible

until you open it up for yourself.

But maybe you've tried reading the Bible before. Maybe you tried a reading plan that just didn't fit. Maybe you started from the beginning to see how far you could get. Maybe you read a passage that you didn't quite know how to interpret.

Those situations can be disheartening, but there's no reason not to try again.

The Bible is amazing...but it's not exactly "easy" to read.

(And honestly, would you expect a book of this caliber to be easy or simple?)

Driving a car isn't easy, but you've mastered that. So don't sell yourself short!

Just because the Bible is profound and complex doesn't mean it's too hard for you to understand. Plus, you don't have to have everything figured out right away. Prayerful Bible study is a journey, and everyone's spiritual journey is unique.

And to help you take those first steps of your journey, we can help you find new the study strategies that are right for you.



Let's start with what is probably your first question: **Where should I start reading?**

The Bible offers a library of genres to choose from including poetry, prophecy, history, narratives, and so much more.

With so many books to choose from, one way to start could be **choosing a genre that interests you.**

If you're still having trouble picking a book to read, or you'd prefer to follow along with more of a story, you can start with **the four Gospel accounts** that begin the New Testament. Many first-time Bible readers find these easier to follow because they're narratives, as opposed to poems, prophecies, or historical lists.

The next thing you want to consider is which Bible version, or translation, you'll read.

There are three different types of translations, each with their own purpose:

1. **Literal translations:** These translations offer a word-for-word translation of Scripture. While these translations are accurate in the sense of literally translating each word, they can often be more difficult to understand since

languages and sentence structures have changed over the years. Priority is given to the translation of each word or phrase, and less attention to connotation, context, and author intent. (Examples of literal translations include KJV, RSV, NASB, AMP, NKJV, and ESV).

2. **Dynamic equivalents:** These translations focus more on conveying the overall message and intent of each verse or passage than writing it word for word from ancient Greek and Hebrew. These versions of the Bible are typically easier to understand but are not intended to be literal translations. (Examples include: NIV, NLT, GW, and CSB).
3. **Paraphrases:** These translations aim to make Scripture more understandable for today's readers. Like dynamic equivalents, they reflect the intent and contextual meaning of each verse. But more effort is put into rewording and lightly expanding upon the original verse to help a reader apply it to their daily lives. Again, while they are easier to read, they don't provide a word-for-word translation of the original ancient text. (Examples include: TLB, The Clear Word, GNT, and MSG).

In the end, it comes down to personal preference. Though it can be helpful to have another couple versions or translation types handy to read alongside one another.



When you've got your Bible ready, here are some general guidelines to help you get the most out of your study:

Make your plan:

The key is coming up with something you can stick to, and something you can return to easily in case you get off track. Simply having a basic plan of what to read and how to study it can help you stay consistent, and you can design it to be flexible if need be.

- **Make it a special time:** Set aside a specific time to study. You could even make a calming playlist or light a scented candle. Make it a time you look forward to.
- **Learn the way you need to learn:** If you need to take written notes, take written notes. If you sort out your thoughts by talking out loud, take notes with a voice recorder app on your phone. Or, if you're often on the go or you learn better through hearing, listen to an audio Bible. If you like visuals, plan to make charts or diagrams. If you're artistic, maybe you'll want your study time to include a sketchbook, paper for painting, or a drawing app.
- **Consider a study partner:** While individual Bible study is crucial, you may benefit from joining a Bible study group or finding a study buddy. This can keep you consistent and accountable while also deepening your understanding. You can bounce ideas off one another, share different perspectives, ask questions, and provide support.

Before you study:

- **Gather your resources:** Whether you're using physical books and paper or online dictionaries, encyclopedias, or concordances, make everything you'll need easily accessible.
- **Pray:** Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your study. When we pray, God promises to

send us the Holy Spirit, who can inspire us and help us understand what we read (Luke 11:13; John 14:26).

Start small:

Don't overwhelm yourself by giving yourself too much to do. Even if you're excited to get started and learn a lot, think about what you'll best be able to stick to.

- **Choose quality over quantity.** Even if you're super eager to read more and more of the Bible, it is often best "absorbed" in smaller pieces for you to take your time and prayerfully meditate upon.
- **Start with manageable time expectations.** The most important thing is starting *at all*. You could begin with just 5 minutes a day as you build this habit into your schedule.
- There are many different things you can incorporate into your Bible study, but you don't have to do them all at once.

Take time to reflect:

Once you feel you have a good idea of what the passage means, reflect on what makes it so significant.

- **Ask yourself questions:** Ask and answer questions for a deeper understanding of the verse. (i.e. What does this passage teach me about God? What does this passage teach me about myself? What other ideas or concepts does this remind me of?)

Brainstorm ways to apply the passage to everyday life:

The wisdom of the Bible is meant for more than just reading. Find ways to put your discoveries into practice.

- **Claim Bible promises:** Pray, claiming the promises you see in each verse. Ask God to help you remember and trust in His promises.
- **Accept correction:** If you read something that challenges you, take time to think about what it's encouraging you to do. So if you read a passage on, say, the dangers of jealousy, look for current or potential things in your life that could become an issue. Think about why, and be intentional about applying the Bible's wisdom on the topic.
- **Accept calls to action:** The Bible doesn't just tell us what *not* to do. Scripture is full of actionable wisdom. So if you read a passage about serving others, for example, make notes of different ways you can do this.
- **Write down your questions.** If you're not sure how to interpret a passage or how to apply it, make a note of it while praying about it. You don't have to understand everything completely right away, or before you move on in your study. Plus, you may find answers to these questions as you progress through Scripture.

Remember that it's ok to be perplexed—and it doesn't have to stop your momentum:

Recognize that you *will* come across parts of this large, ancient, multifaceted text that leave you with more questions than answers. **That's ok.** In fact, that's part of the idea. There is always more to learn, and you don't have to get everything figured out completely, right from the get-go.



Pray about anything that puzzles you, and you can use additional resources to help get things figured out.

- **Bible dictionaries and/or encyclopedias.** These can help you find out the meaning of certain words or names you come across, providing you with

additional contextual details.

- **Concordances** provide an index for you to find where in the Bible certain words, names, places, etc., appear. And many Bible websites also have concordance functionality with every word being searchable.
- **Commentaries** provide scholarly interpretations and historical details, searchable by book or passage.

Here are a few resources you might find helpful:

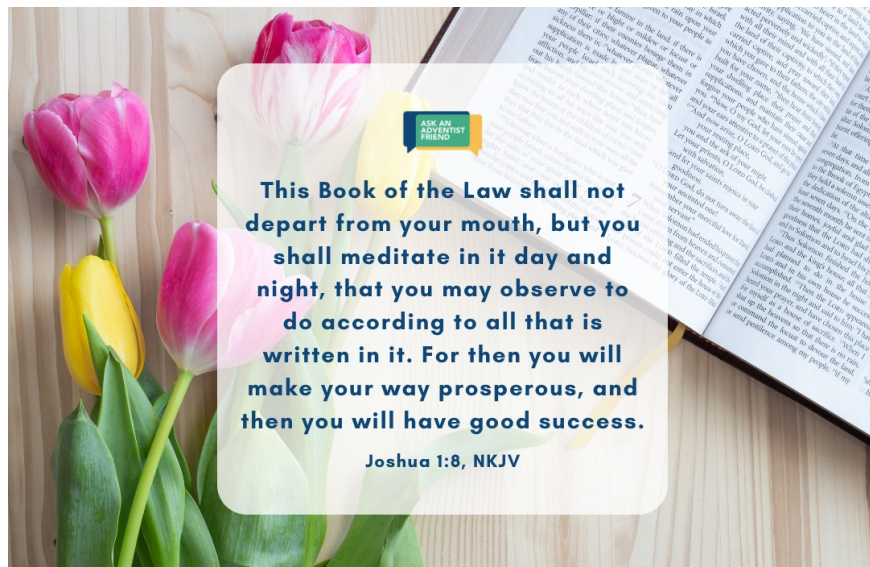
- Biblehub.com
- Bibleschools.com
- KJV Bible with Strong's
- Vines Expository Dictionary
- Biblegateway.com

Now it's time to start reading!



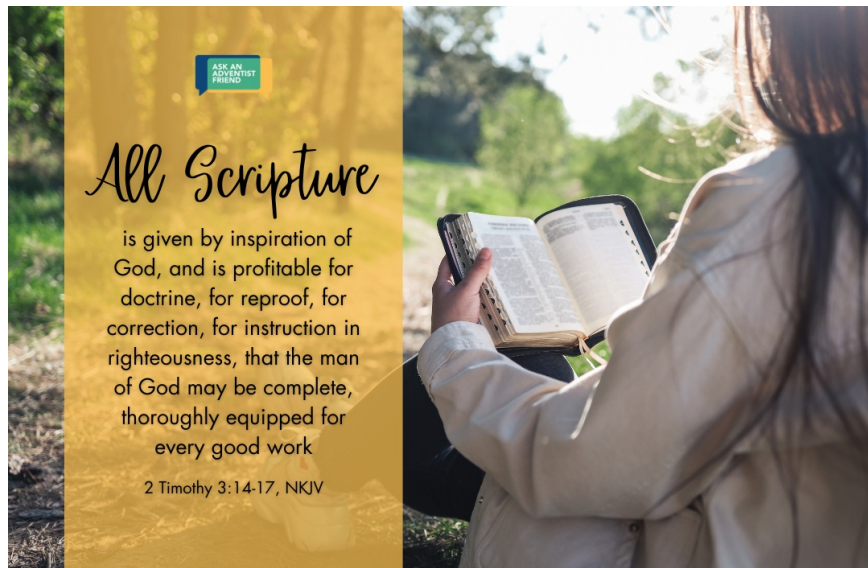
For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12, NKJV



This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Joshua 1:8, NKJV



All Scripture

is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work

2 Timothy 3:14-17, NKJV



And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32, NKJV

In understanding Scripture, we better understand our Creator, His unmatched love, and the lengths He is going through to save us.

To help you get your study started, **download this free guide** about different Bible study strategies.

13 DIFFERENT **BIBLE STUDY STRATEGIES**



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What do Adventists believe about the Mark of the Beast and 666?



What was Ellen and James White's marriage like?