

How Should We Read The Bible

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the importance of studying the Bible as God's word, highlighting the need to read it with purpose, seek Christ throughout its pages, prioritize daily reading, and ask questions to deepen understanding. It encourages prayerful reading, Bible memorization, and utilizing tools for comprehension, while emphasizing the transformative power of God's word in revealing His will, teaching, and guiding believers to know Him more intimately.

Duration: 38:40

Scripture: Proverbs 2:3, John 5:39, Psalm 119:105, 2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12, Psalm 19:7, Romans 15:4, Colossians 3:16, Psalm 119:18, Matthew 7:7

Topics: "Importance of Bible Study", "Transformative Power of God's Word"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of studying the Bible as God's word, highlighting the need to read it with purpose, seek Christ throughout its pages, prioritize daily reading, and ask questions to deepen understanding. It encourages prayerful reading, Bible memorization, and utilizing tools for comprehension, while emphasizing the transformative power of God's word in revealing His will, teaching, and guiding believers to know Him more intimately.

Transcript

This is Ingrid's question. She just shot Ruby five words, how to study the Bible? Question mark. So how do we study the Bible? How do we study the Bible? That is a really good question.

I mean, I just think of the disciples asking Jesus, teach us to pray. I mean, we could probably almost wish that, or teach us how to read our Bibles. Find that missing chapter that has that instruction in it.

But look, this ought not to be a mystery to us. What is the Bible? Is that all? It's God's word. We're dealing with a book that is a translation from manuscripts handed down from the originals, given by prophets and apostles, men carried along by the spirit of God.

We actually have God's word to mankind in a book. And so how to read the Bible? Well, I guess that we have to recognize that we have to read. I mean, reading is essential.

And so what is the purpose of reading this book? Why would we even want to read it? I mean, okay, this is God's word, but why would we even go to that book and read it? Why do you read it? Do you read it? To know the God of the book. To know the God of the book. I mean, God has spoken.

Our creator has spoken. The one that is our judge has spoken. And yeah, where does he reveal himself? Well, I mean, we could say the heavens declare the glory of God.

But the truth is that if I look at the stars, I can look at the stars a long time. Am I going to be able to figure out that Christ is the Messiah? I mean, we're told that faith comes by hearing the word of Christ. We read that book because, what does Paul tell Timothy about that book, about the scriptures? It's God breathed.

Well, it's God breathed. What did they make us wise to? Salvation. Salvation.

Wise to salvation. It also tells us there's doctrine there. There's teaching.

There's reproof. There's correction. There's instruction in righteousness in that book.

We go to that book and what do we find? We find out who God is. We find out who Christ is. We find out who man is.

We find out how to be saved in that book. We find out what God's will. I mean, if we're going to try to discern the will of the Lord for us, this is where God expresses his will.

So, okay, here we are. You have to think about what we're trying to do. What are we trying to do? We're trying to get truths that have been spoken in times past, recorded for us in a book.

We're trying to get those letters and words and sentences and paragraphs into our brains. So that what? We can worship. We can be blown away by the majesty of this God.

So that we can know what to believe about him. So that we can see his promises and know what he has promised to those that trust him. We can see his mighty works put on display.

We can see and learn about his son and how he was sent into the world and what he's accomplished. And what's our task? Our task is to go into this book and actually get the sense of it. The way God meant it to be.

Actually get a sense of the glory. Actually understand it. Actually embrace the truth of it.

Actually have our faith fed and fired by the realities of it. And so how does that happen? Can anybody just come to understand spiritual things? The spirit of God reveals things. Can anybody understand it? Can anybody come along and just understand spiritual realities? Is there a verse in scripture that would seem to indicate that there are certain people who... Spiritually discerned.

Should we tell lost people not to read the Bible? Or do we suppose that lost people can understand the Bible? Sorry, I missed that. I was too busy. What was the question again? Should we just suppose that lost people can read the Bible and understand it? Or should we suppose that lost people can't understand it? No, they should be able to understand the Bible.

That's why we give Bibles out, evangelism, because if they read it and understand it, I'm sure there's some things that are a bit more difficult to understand. When you get saved, you understand it more fully. You know, there's a verse.

Let's look at this. It's found in John 7. There's a verse that I often think about. Found in John 7, verse 17.

It says, if anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. Now, what Jesus is saying is this. He's speaking.

And he says, if he speaks to somebody whose will is to do God's will, they will come to understand spiritual truths about the fact that God is speaking through Christ. You see that? If somebody's will is to do God's will, then they will be granted ability to comprehend just where this truth is coming from. They will see that this truth is indeed God's truth.

Now, what I find so interesting about that is this. It's like, I would say this. When we're dealing with lost people, I would say that there are two kinds of people that we ought to assume can understand scripture.

Lost or saved, if your will is to do God's will. And you know, God said through the prophet Isaiah, that to this man will I look, and it's he who is humble and contrite and trembles at my word. It's kind of like, you know, we have this idea that Simon, Jesus asked the guys, but who do you guys say that I am? And Peter said, you're the Christ, the son of the living God.

And he said, flesh and blood has not revealed that to you. Well, it's the sense that we get is that God teaches. God, if somebody's will is to do God's will, if you have a lost person like that scribe who is genuine, who is seeking, who humbles themselves, that guy humbled himself.

You know, you can't enter the kingdom unless you become like a little child. Isn't that what it says? And that man was taking steps towards that, that child likeness, that embracing what God has said, not fighting it, recognizing what is true. And I think that this is key.

You need to be saved. And if lost, we trust that if somebody has a desire to truly find the truth, somebody who is rebellious, somebody who has no intention, somebody who does not want to hear, they don't want to know the truth, it shouldn't be surprising that they're not going to be able to understand when they come to scripture like this. So how to study the Bible? Listen, Psalm 119.18 says this, open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

I would say this, don't be prayerless when you read your Bible. It is very important. Listen, listen, listen.

Scripture, we can't emphasize this enough. Everyone who asks receives. You can't emphasize it enough.

You do not have because you do not ask. You know what? Don't be surprised if you go to your Bible and you read and you never ask God to show you the glories of his word, to teach you who he is, to teach you what his will for you is, to show you wondrous things. Don't be surprised if a lot of the times you go to the word of God and it seems dry and boring.

If you're not imploring the Lord to open your eyes to show you wondrous things, that's a biblical prayer. Don't be afraid of that. Don't be afraid to ask.

We ought to be asking, asking, asking. Why? Well, look, if Peter is told, Peter, you know how you came to recognize the glories about who I am? Flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you, Peter. My father revealed that to you.

And you know what? In the same way God the father revealed to Peter, God the father can reveal to you. And there's no question about it. You can go into God's word and all of a sudden have your eyes open to something that you never saw before.

I mean, don't you find that? Don't you find that sometimes you can get in and you read a certain portion of scripture and it's kind of dry and you can sit down at that same portion of scripture a year later or six months later, whenever it is. And suddenly it just comes to life. And I've told this story before.

I just remember Hudson Taylor. He was bemoaning the fact that he was coming to what he considered to be just a dry, drab portion of scripture. And you know, if you've read your Bible cover to cover, you know that there are some parts of the Bible that can be quite honest.

It's like, oh, I just want to get past this part. Well, he was at a part of the Bible like that. It's just not this, not this today.

I need God to speak to me. Well, yes, God, please, Lord, I need you to speak to me. And he read this, what usually he considered to be, you know, that kind of dry portion of scripture.

And suddenly God made it life and light. And just, it really came to life for him. And look, if you've been a Christian in any amount of time, you read your Bible on a regular basis, you know, that's true.

You know, God can just make it come alive. Where it is soul satisfying, where you just, you see things you haven't seen. Or even if it's something you've seen before, it just comes with such excitement to your soul.

You ought to want that. And you ought to, you know, just ask for it. Why would you not ask? Well, you just don't want to be prayerless when you're going to your Bibles, when there's a text like that.

Because that's God teaching us through David. God told him to do that. David, record that so that all my people through all of time are going to see that you asked me for that.

That's inspired. The spirit of God said, David, write that. And we should be asking for the same thing.

We should really have a desire for that. So we want to pray. And, you know, just like with Hudson Taylor.

The fact is, Taylor went to his Bible that day. And you know what? He was in a certain place in his Christian life. And he was feeling dry that day.

He really needed God. God knows exactly where each one of us are. And the truth is, when you go to your Bible tomorrow morning, or whenever you do, and I go, well, we're in different places in life.

We're facing different things. We might have different trials. We might have different things.

I mean, we're all in a different place. And so you may read the same verses that I read. And God may have a different purpose for me reading it than what purpose he has in your life.

I mean, that's one thing we can always be certain of, that God knows right where we are. He knows what we need. He knows, I mean, the scriptures are meant to, they're God's voice to us.

And they address us, reproof, correction, instruction. That's what Paul told Timothy. And you may need reproof.

You may need rebuke. You may need comfort. You may need encouragement in a place that, quite honestly, I don't need right now.

I may need something else. But God knows, and he knows how to minister to us through his word. God's people have been being ministered to by the word of God through thousands of years.

And God knows quite well. You think about it. What did God do to equip us for this whole journey? Well, yes, he gave us his spirit, but he gave us a book.

And the spirit works through that book. I mean, you can't hardly think of an operation of the spirit of God that isn't somehow connected to that book. And usually it's central.

I mean, God gave us a book. And so how to read the Bible? Well, prayerfully. But the next thing is you gotta read it.

The biggest problem that Christians have is they don't read it. Somebody says, how to read the Bible? Well, first thing is open it and actually get your eyeballs on the words and start thinking word by word, sentence by sentence, what in the world is being said here? And you know what? If you're gonna read the Bible and if the Bible is so essential to living the Christian life and to learning who God is and to ministering to you in the different aspects of life that you're in. And this is where you find Christ.

It's faith comes by hearing the word of Christ. If you want your faith strengthened, oh, we need our faith strengthened all the time. Where does it come from? Well, it comes from the word of Christ.

That's where it's gonna happen. Don't think, I'll tell you this, people in the church that have the least amount of faith are least in the word of God. You didn't make the connection.

Just, if I see somebody in the church that it's like, wow, you just never get the feel that those people wanna trust the Lord when it comes to what they do with their money or the church's money, or they're always, it just seems such in the grips of unbelief. You can probably almost lay it down. They're not serious in getting in the word of God and reading and pondering and meditating.

You've got, listen, if the word of God is one of the most essential things for living the Christian life, then what do you think ought to be a priority in your life? I would say how to read the Bible. With priority. When you start to prioritize everything that you do in a day of your life or in a week of your life, if the Bible reading, I mean, when I think about traveling, it's like, okay, I need my passport, I need my Bible.

I need my passport because I'm not gonna travel without it, but I need my Bible. I gotta have my Bible. That ought to be the way you think.

The Bible ought to be like in the top three things of what you're gonna do every single day of your life. Why? Well, because it's that essential. If you despise the word, what you're really doing is despising the God who gave that word.

Why? Because it's his voice. Don't we sing, speak, oh Lord. Well, do you really mean it? Do you want him to speak? How are you just asking him to speak like in your dreams at night? I mean, the way God speaks to us is primarily through this book.

And what has to happen? Look, I've pastored long enough to recognize this. I was at GCC for 20 years, 19 years. And I can tell you this, I saw people who came into the church and they got saved.

They hit the ground running. And I saw other people that I could say what the author of Hebrews says, at such a time as you ought to be teachers, you need somebody to teach you the basics again. Oftentimes,

when you look at the differences between the people, I'll tell you what's up without exception.

There's no exception to this. If you've got somebody that has advanced as a Christian faster and further than most others, they are close to their Bibles. They're that goofy guy that brings his Bible even when there's a fellowship and will fall away from the crowd at times to read it.

They're the ones that, as they think about what they're gonna do tomorrow, they don't even have to plan it. Because it's so much a part and a habitual practice in their life that when they get up in the morning, that's the first thing that they do. They're gonna sit down and they're not gonna play games.

They're not gonna read three verses. They're gonna read three chapters or they're gonna read 13 chapters. They take it serious.

How do you do that? Prioritizing in life. You're deliberate about what you're doing with your day, how you're structuring your day with intent. You set aside blocks of time where you say, I'm gonna do that.

I'm gonna get in that word. And I know we busyness in life, raising children, you got a job to run off to, but I was there. Listen, I was a mechanical engineer for 15 years.

And 14 of those years, I was a Christian. And you get up and I typically would have about 40 minutes in the word before I ran off to work. And you have to prioritize.

People don't become saturated in scripture by accident. They are very deliberate people. And so, yes, can you pray? Lord, show me glorious things.

Yes, but you do know this. God's not gonna show you any glory unless you're actually reading it. You gotta read it.

It's not my osmosis just because like when I was lost, I was like this half cook Catholic that had a Bible up on my dresser. Just more of a superstitious thing. I thought it would drive demons away or whatever.

Like vampire, I hold it up and you're not gonna see glorious things when your Bible collects dust. In fact, I remember Spurgeon said, some of you can write damnation in the dust on the covers of your Bible. Ouch, but he's right.

He's absolutely right. And professing Christians who just do not have a hunger for the word of God, they don't go together. They don't go together.

And it's like lots of things. One of the greatest ways, it's like priming the pump. You know what priming the pump is? You have the old hand pumps and you typically poured water in it to get it to gush water.

It's kind of like that. It's like the Bible is a kind of thing where it's almost like the more you read of it, the more you delight in it. The more you read in it, the more glory you see and the more you long after it.

But you gotta read it. You gotta read it. That's the first thing.

So how to read it? Well, you want to believe that you can read it. You say, what do you mean? I mean this. I get the feeling that some people just hardly feel like they can sit down with the Bible and actually understand it.

Look, I understand lost people sitting down with the Bible and saying, that's like Greek to me. This is how it was when I was lost. I'd open up the Bible and it's like, I don't even know what that's saying, is it? But if you've got the spirit of God, the spirit of God opens our eyes.

Spirit of God gives us insight. Spirit of God is with us. The spirit of God speaks through the word.

You do recognize this, that Jesus said to people all the time, have you not read? In other words, the Bible was there to be read. It would have been understood if you would have read it. Do you recognize that, except for what we might call the pastoral epistles, who was scripture written to? Think about it.

The epistle of Romans was written to who? It was written to the Christians at Rome, Ephesians to the saints who were at Ephesus, not just leaders. You do recognize that scripture was written to the common man. And they say in the early church, there was lots of slaves.

What we need to recognize is this, are there some things that are difficult to understand in scripture? Yes. But you know what? There are enormous amounts of scripture that can be understood by the simplest people. And it is in fact that what Psalm 19 says, it makes wise the simple.

What's the obvious meaning of that? Well, somebody that's simple, they don't have to have high intellect. One time I asked a pastor friend, he was going to Africa to teach. And I said, what are you teaching? I think he told me 2 Timothy.

I said, why? Like what's happening there that would cause you to speak on 2 Timothy? He said, just to show the guys that you can actually study a book of the Bible and understand what it means. And I said, I totally get it. I mean, it's just like to show these African pastors that you can actually sit down with a book and read all the way through it and understand what you understand it.

It's not just a hodgepodge of undecipherable thoughts. It's actually something that you can read. And I know this, when I was a young Christian, I heard John MacArthur say that his advice for young Christians, and this could go for even those of you that, because I still do this to this day.

He said, take a book like 1 John and read it once a day for 30 days. What's 1 John? Five chapters. You sit down.

Listen, I could read Hebrews 13 chapters from end to end. And I disciplined myself not to stop, not to park anywhere. It was when I was preaching through it.

Every week I wanted to read through it to have the whole forest. I didn't want to stop anywhere. I was reading it to get an overall feel for the sake of the passages that I was preaching from that week.

How does it fit in the whole? I could read Hebrews from end to end in 35 minutes. If I can read 13 chapters, a book of, so how long would it take to read Ephesians, or Galatians, or Philipians, or Colossians, 1 Thessalonians? Half the time. Less than half the time.

You can read the whole book of 1 John from end to end for 30 days. And you know what happens? Every day you see more and more and more. I've had times when we came here, when the COVID thing, when you guys first had us come and you put us up in Ashton over here in the apartment, I was reading Isaiah.

I would read the whole thing or half of it every day that we were there to the best of my memory. And I've had, you know, when I did the Tuesday Bible study on Matthew and John, just basically if we were to look

at them and just get a feel for what it tells us we ought to do. Well, in preparation for that, I just went through and I just read them over and over and over.

There can be times when you read the Bible that way. I would say to everybody, don't get far away from the Gospels for long. You should read there.

Why? Just because they're so central to Christ. They bring, the whole Bible is about Christ, but they obviously, there's four of them. Why? Because it's the most important thing.

And the greatest emphasis in the four Gospels is the last week that he walked this earth. And so what the Bible is doing is showing us by repetition and by just the quantity of material that we have on Christ's life and especially that last week, just how essential that is. We need to go there.

We need to study Christ. And I just highly encourage you, be much in the Psalms. Why? The Psalms are just so practical.

They just, they basically deal with every kind of emotion and every kind of situation that we find ourselves in. It just, God so wisely gave, it's just such a subjective realities pouring out of these Psalm writers. And then the Proverbs, I mean, Proverbs is tremendous, especially if you're a newer Christian, just to get those kinds of principles down.

But you gotta read. And I encourage everybody, read your Bible cover to cover. Some people read better.

Some people read faster. Some people are gonna have more time. You need to make this a priority.

You know, maybe you don't read the whole Bible through in a year. Maybe it takes you three years to read the whole Bible cover to cover. That's okay.

Just be in it, be thinking on it. I highly commend Bible memorization. Even if you forget it later on, it is so profitable.

Why? Because as you're memorizing, you have to think through every word, every sentence, and you actually begin to realize things that when you just read, perhaps you don't catch. So I highly encourage Bible memorization. And have the tools, have the tools available to help you.

If you get hung up somewhere, if you are trying to figure out the meaning of something, know, I mean, if you need advice from others, I'm sure people can always help you out. Ruby and I can always tell you who our favorite commentators are. I mean, there are some guys you just find out on a regular basis that they have good things to say.

But you know, as you study, what do you want to look for? As you read your Bible, what is this telling me about God? What is this telling me? Can I find Christ in here? I mean, if there's anything that excites me about going through the Minor Prophets is I'm looking for Christ. I'm looking for the church. I'm looking for how does this impact me? God said, these things have been recorded for our sake.

But you have to recognize that. As you go through the New Testament, you recognize when the New Testament authors were writing, they only, the Christians only had the Old Testament. And so what they would say is things about, you know, whatsoever was recorded, these things are examples.

These things are for our instruction. And so remember that when you're back there reading the Old Testament, they specifically have been preserved for our instruction. That means that you can learn something about the way God is, the way God interacts with us.

You can learn something about what God expects from us. You do want to read it with a recognition that there is an old covenant and there is a new covenant with the coming of Christ. There has been a change to the law.

There's been a change to the priesthood. There's been a change of covenants. You want to recognize that.

You want to have some understanding of what that means. Look, you can't get away from this. When you come to the New Testament, Jesus says this.

He says, learn of me. He said, there's a wise man. There's a foolish man.

The wise man, he hears Jesus' words and he does them. The father said, when he's speaking on the Mount of Transfiguration, this is my beloved son. He said, hear him.

You listen to him. So there's no question when you come to the New Testament that Jesus is the example. He washed their feet.

He said, I've given you an example. Jesus is the model. He's this prototype.

His words, you want to find Christ. You want to find Christ. You want to learn of Christ.

You want to imitate Christ. He said, follow me. If you say you know him, you ought to walk as he walked.

That's what John tells us in his first epistle. Look, there's examples all over the place. He was rich.

He became poor. That's our example for giving. See how he received.

I mean, see how he sacrificed. Let's see his humility. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ.

So that's how scripture speaks all over the place. Jesus is set forth as this example. You want to find him, find Christ.

He said, you read the scriptures in him and you think you have eternal life. And he said, they speak of me. I was telling the guys at the men's retreat.

You go to the song of Solomon. You need to find Christ. You read in the Psalms.

You should be looking for Christ. You're reading in Leviticus. You should find Christ.

He's everywhere. You can find types and shadows of Christ in Abraham, in Jacob, in Joseph, in Abel, in Adam, in Noah. I mean, it's like God is just flavored everything with a sense of Christ.

If you can look beyond the shadows, the substance behind it all is Christ. And so you want to look. Lord, show us Christ.

Show us where he's at. And I would say one of the most important things when it comes to reading the Bible, one of the most important things is ask questions. Ask questions.

When you read things, recognize this. It's God's glory to conceal a matter. The Proverbs says that you will find knowledge.

You will find wisdom when you seek for it as for hidden treasure. So you got to dig. Not everything is on the surface in the Bible.

You got to do a lot of digging. And you got to ask questions. One of the tools, one of the shovels for digging is just question asking.

Like, what does it sound like it's saying? And why is it said that way? And what is God saying there? Why would he say that? You ought to be asking those questions. Ask questions all the time. Don't be afraid to write in your Bibles.

Don't be afraid to make notes. Don't be afraid to write your questions down. I mean, and then ask the Lord for answers.

And you know, I still have questions that I don't have answered. But as you read the Bible through again and again and again, more and more opens up. I can remember the first time I read through the Bible.

The first time I read through the New Testament, I saw judgment on every page because I wasn't saved yet. So everything just screamed judgment at me. I can remember reading the Bible cover to cover in the beginning.

I can remember just being blown away by God killing the whole world, save eight souls and Sodom and Gomorrah and Uzzah being struck dead. And I just, I started, I was afraid. But you can ask yourself, why, why, why this? Why, why is that so confusing? Why did God use parables? Why did God use these illustrations? Why does, Lord, what are you talking about? You're talking to here in Isaiah.

And it's like, you're talking about all these different things. What in the world does this have to do with me? How does this even fit into my life? But you should ask questions all the time. I mean, that's, that's one of the things I just like about preaching from that book is just that there's all sorts of mysteries and questions and God has purposes.

God is infinitely wise. And He can, He can give us the ability to recognize things. I will say this, that, you know, you can find it really helpful.

Now, I'm not, I'm not saying this as a replacement for Bible reading, but I know that if, if you will play audio Bible, like if, if you're at home all day and you just have the Bible playing in the background, I recognize that you, you can kind of drift away and you can get involved in things you're doing. But it's amazing how often your mind will go back to it. And if you just leave it playing there in the background, it can, it can be profitable.

And you just begin to hear it over and over. You hear portions of scripture and just every way we can get it in our ears, every way we can, you know, we put it on our walls and you just get it in the brains of your children. And there's life in this book.

It makes us wise unto salvation. There's no book like it. You want to treat it like what it is.

It's God's gift to us. He's imparted revelation directly from himself.

Video: https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/886leMw_e-o.mp4
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/tim-conway/how-should-we-read-the-bible/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net