

# Way of Discipleship Small Groups

## How do we read the Bible well?



### Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



### Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

What might be some of the things that could go wrong when we read the Bible?



### Understanding the information (20 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

As someone on our video this week shares, “The Bible isn’t exactly an easy fiction read!” So what might help us to read it well as we seek to listen to God?

Remembering that each part of the Bible only makes sense in relationship to the whole. Even though the Bible is divided up into 66 books and the Old Testament (39) and New Testament (27) (testament means “statement of belief” or “covenant”), it is one unified story. The more we can read it as one story (nearly half the Bible is written as “narrative”), the more the details make sense. For example, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah only make sense when we know the context and hope of Israel’s story. Despite the incredible variety of books (written over 1500 years by over 40 people) the whole Bible has a remarkable unity of direction.



The Bible is one story which shapes us. The unified story of the Bible not only tells us what God has done, but it also reveals what God is doing and what ultimately God will do. It shows us where we have come from, what we are here for and where we are headed. This story shapes the decisions and priorities we live by.

By knowing God’s story as best we can we find ourselves living as part of His-story, rather than seeking to fit God into our story. In our additional notes we look in more detail at how to do this.

**Remembering that at the centre of the story is Jesus.** Whatever we read in the Bible makes most sense when it points us to Jesus. He is the one in whom we see the complete character of God, and who shows us God's purposes. He is the one to whom the whole story of the Old Testament points, and who fulfils its hopes. When we read parts of the Bible which are hard to understand, the only way to approach them is to ask how they relate to Him.

This was something Christ Himself claimed, saying that all the earlier books of the Bible point to Him: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me." (John 5:46).

This brings us to an important point. The main way in which God speaks to us is not through the Bible (or any other means) but through Jesus Christ. The Bible is God's word, but only exists to point us to the Word of God – Christ. To read the Bible well is always to understand it through Christ, and always be led to Christ through the Bible.

**The Bible is a living word.** We can approach the Bible for knowledge, instruction, or understanding of ultimate truths about God and His world. But to read the Bible well is also to approach it as God's communication of truth, for me personally, in a given moment. It is a "living and active" word, an encounter with God as His Spirit takes the words from the page and applies them to my mind and heart. This is the kind of listening to God through Scripture which Jesus longed to see His disciples experience: "The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life." (John 6:63)

There are two words for "word" in the New Testament. One word, *logos*, is used to describe God's eternal, unchanging truth. Jesus is the "Logos" at the beginning of John's gospel – the true Word of God. The other word, *rhema*, is the word that speaks into a specific situation and quickens our hearts. The words that give life are Jesus' *rhema*. *Logos* and *rhema* never contradict each other, and both are needed. The more we can open the Bible with an expectation that this "living and active" book will help us to meet with God, the better we will read it.

**Listening with the mind and the heart.** One question is should we read it through our thoughts, or our feelings, or both? Is it ever helpful to bring our feelings into the way we read Scripture? A man called Ignatius believed it was essential to do both. We need to understand God's story with our minds, but, in order to be able to make a true response to it, we know to also understand our feelings and desires. The Bible invites us to love God with our "heart (feelings, desires, motives) and our mind (thoughts, ideas, worldview)" - we will listen well to God through the Scripture if we can do both in the way we read it. The two practices that can train us to "be with God" in Scripture are study (mind) and meditation (heart). There are further sessions available on study and meditation.

**Discuss:** Are you more naturally inclined to read with the mind or the heart? How much does this matter?

## Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read John 5: 36-40 in which Jesus reveals the true word of God.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:  
What does this passage teach me about God?  
What does this passage teach me about people?  
How does this passage call me to obey God?  
What might I do in response to this this week?



## Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

<https://youtu.be/KvLIG82rSjU>

What struck you as important in the video?



## Optional further material and questions

Share these thoughts or read them together:

Tom Wright and others have described the Bible as being like taking part in a play of five acts.

The first four acts describe what has happened – God has made the world (1), yet it has fallen (2). He has called a people to be a blessing and yet the conflict between good and evil continues (3). The play reaches its climax in Jesus, in whom God deals decisively with sin and death (4).

But now we are waiting for the final act (5) in which God’s creation will be completely healed when Christ returns and we will reign with Him forever.

We live between acts four and five, and God calls us to live out His continuing story through our day-to-day obedience and love. The more we are familiar with the “script” of the Bible, the more we will naturally be able to continue the story.

This will mean we “improvise” faithfully, based on what has gone before, and on how we know the play ends.

The Bible contains some rules and instructions – but we don’t primarily read it in order to be able to keep them. Rather, to read it well means to become so familiar with God’s story that our own daily stories become increasingly part of it.

Discuss: How can the Bible help us “improvise faithfully”?

## Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



## Group prayer (5 minutes)

Jesus, You were with God in the beginning.  
Through You all things were made.  
In You is life, and this life is the light of all mankind.  
Your light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome You  
You are the living Word.  
Amen.





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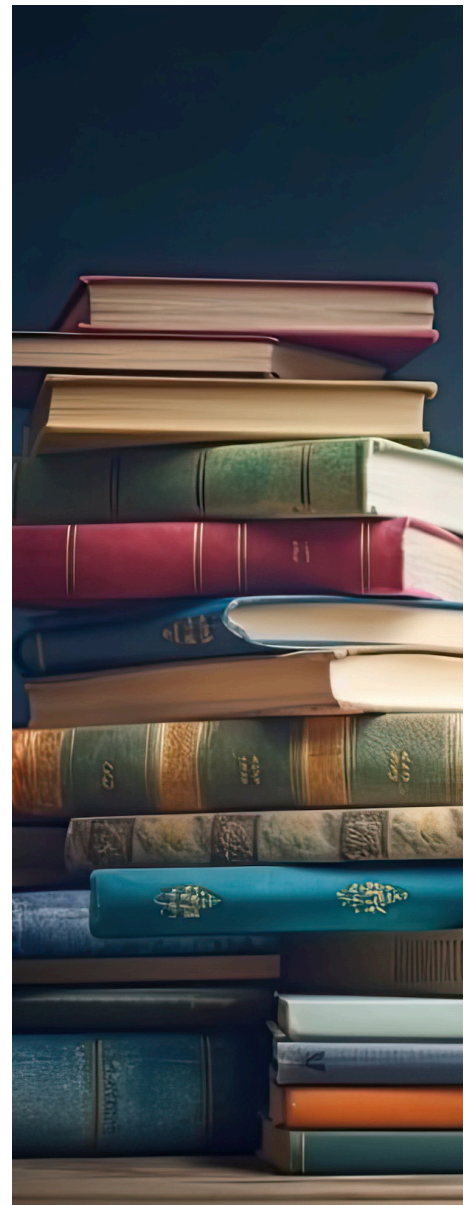
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## Additional notes:

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