

Growing Your Relationship With God's Voice

A Bible Reading Plan.

Pastor Nigel Ripley



Legacy

Community
Church

**Reading God's Word is a powerful and transforming journey.
Especially if you're not just reading, but *seeking*...**

Some people get bored reading, but that can change if you approach God's Word with the attitude of seeking God's *voice*, His revealing, and leading. In other words, if you open the scriptures to find and relate with God. John 1:

- Vs1. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, **and the Word was God.***
- Vs.14. ***The Word became flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of **the one and only Son**, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The Bible isn't just a book of histories and stories. It's God's voice speaking to us if we open our heart to search for Him. He promises to reward those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.' Jeremiah 29:13

Set your heart to seek after God, to know Him, and find His Spirit speaking to you through the scriptures in the Bible.

Here is a way of seeking God in the scriptures that I have found effective over the years.

The Set Up

Set yourself up to seek and find, not just read 'to get it done'.

1. Environment

What works for you? Always prepare a space and place that you can be relatively **free from distraction**, and free to be yourself.

And if your phone regularly has alerts and notifications buzzing or chiming, put it on silent. Don't let your phone interrupt this Holy time with God. The rest of the world can just wait...

2. Tools

There are many Bible translations to use, and some are less accurate than others due to the challenge of translating old languages into new languages in different cultures.

I'd suggest translations like New King James Version (KNJV), or New International Version (NIV), or New American Standard Bible (NASB).

And use a paper Bible rather than screen Bible. Why? Because a paper Bible helps you tune in to a sacred encounter, rather than the brain expecting digital stimulation.

Our computer and phone screens are designed for creating superficial stimulus, entertainment, and a continual offering of ‘something else’. Because our brains are often pre-conditioned to wanting ‘something else’ from our screen, we can battle temptation, rather than being content with just the words of the Bible. And research has shown that we have to work harder to focus and engage with words on a digital screen, than on a real page.

Also, using a physical Bible is part of setting apart time and a space for the sacred. It helps with your whole approach to setting yourself up to encounter God.

And don’t just have a Bible – have a pen, and notebook/journal too. If you’re reading the Bible to seek and hear from God, be ready to note down what God gives you. It’s partly a step of faith, as well as a practise for setting yourself up to meet with God. **What does your set-up say about your expectation?** Are you expecting to hear from God, or have you prepared yourself for a quick read and moving on without any expectation that God is speaking to you? We find what we genuinely continue to seek.

The Bible is the written Word of God to you: He is literally speaking through those written words. Be ready to note down anything that stands out to you. It’s a game changer! Again, I’d encourage you to use pen/pencil and paper. A digital device could be good for recording and access; but is it more of a distraction?

3. Prayer

Ask God to help you be still in your heart and thoughts and ask Him to help you notice what He wants to show you. Maybe even start with a slow prayer, out loud, to grab the attention of your whole heart, mind, and body. Slow yourself down and tune your whole person into the words on the page.

“Holy Spirit, anoint me to see and know you in these scriptures. Guide me in truth, keep me from error, fill me and instruct me. Amen.”

4. Routine

I find people are less likely to have regular times in God’s Word, if they don’t commit to a routine. I.e. If they wait until they have enough time, they won’t. Or if they aim to have time in the Word at ‘some stage’ today, every stage of the day gets filled up with other things. Having a set time each day, helps you organise your life *around that time*, and helps you focus. Every day is then prepared with a **sacred time** that belongs to you and God alone, and that’s what you begin to look forward to. It’s a relief and it’s refreshing – it’s sacred and not scattered.

Prophet and Scribe

You’ll notice in the Old Testament that there are at least 17 books attributed to specific prophets. That’s a lot of books in the Bible! Worth noting that the books weren’t a

history of the prophet's life, but rather, a record of what God was saying to and through the prophet. Usually, a prophet would have a person (scribe) writing out a record of their prophetic messages.

When you set aside time to meet with God in His Word, remember that you are both the prophet and the scribe. Be ready for God to speak to you, and to note down what He says. This is the foundation of your relationship with God, because it is a practice of seeking God, knowing Him, and noting what He reveals. Then, you can refer to it, learn, respond, and most importantly, obey it. If you don't write it down, you'll likely forget it, and you're less likely to be serious (or accountable) in obeying it. See Matthew 7:24-28 and chapter 28 vs 20

Don't write down everything you read. And don't read everything at once.

Instead, read a section – like a chapter, or a couple of paragraphs from a book, tuning into what is happening in the passage. Then read it again, slowly, looking for what stands out for you. You may notice that some words, statements, or situations feel like they carry extra weight for you today. Take time to *notice* things and *note* them down. Some readings may have very little; some may have much. Some you may know very well from memory, but today, fresh revelation may stand out for you. Don't miss it and don't leave it: write it down and respond.

A Reading Plan

Intentional, not Random

Don't let your readings be a 'lucky dip' from a random selection, hoping God will follow your shake of the dice. Each book in the Bible has a purpose and context and needs to be read that way. As you read, you learn more about the books, the characters, and the contexts. My suggestion for someone starting with a regular reading practise is to start with the following books and read a small amount from 3 of them at a time. If you want to read a large amount, do that at another time. But in your daily routine of seeking and listening to God, read small amounts *slowly* and consider them *carefully*.

You could start by reading each day from: Mark, Exodus, and a Psalm or some Proverbs. Work through these books, passage by passage, before moving onto other books.

Maybe alternate days reading Psalms and Proverbs.

For example:

- Day 1: Mark 1:1-8. Then Exodus 1:1-22. Then Psalm 1
- Day 2: Mark 1:9-10. Then Exodus 2:1-10. Then Proverbs 1:1-19
- Day 3: the next passage from Mark and Exodus, and back to Psalm 2.

Mark and Exodus would be 'current focus books'. Psalms and Proverbs are books that you will continue to read (on repeat) alongside the focus books. Psalms are great for using as prayers. Proverbs are powerful for learning wisdom which you will need for decision making each day.

Here are the 'current focus books' I'd suggest you use as a reading plan:

From the New Testament: Mark, then Luke, then Acts, then Matthew.

From the Old Testament: Exodus, then Deuteronomy, then Chronicles, then Ezra and Nehemiah.

So, a daily dose of:

- one book from the New Testament;
- one book from the Old Testament, and
- either a Psalm or some Proverbs.

That might sound like a lot, but the aim isn't to read several chapters of each. Rather, slowly read a short amount from each, taking notes of what stands out for you.

The purpose isn't reading – it's hearing. Hearing God speak to you through the scriptures.

Your prayer, including the Psalms, are for giving to God in praise and thanksgiving, as well as asking for help.

But these reading times are for you to hear from God in a holy relationship.

Remember:

'...man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.' Deuteronomy 8:3

Your time each day in the Word of God, is time feeding your soul and spirit, and time getting to know God.

Create the space for a holy encounter.

Alternatively

Some people find it hard to sit still and read. If you have ADD or ADHD or dyslexia or some other condition impacting on your reading, you will need to find strategies that work for you. This is not 'a one size fits all.' Nor is it a law to be obeyed. It's a practise and a strategy. Adapt as needed.

For some, maybe it could help to walk slowly while reading.

Or, you could listen to an audio Bible while reading. Doing these together can help grip your attention and focus.

Reading out loud is also a very helpful and fruitful way of reading scripture. I do that if there are other noises beginning to creep in that distract me.

For the type of holy rhythm I'm talking about, I'd advise against watching a Bible movie or series. These can detract from perceiving God's leading and illumination, but, can be used outside of this time. TV series and movies often only give you 2nd hand thoughts and ideas from the actors and Directors. And sometimes, the way they set up a scene, or the mood they cast a character in, can be inaccurate... and that sticks in your mind.

Keep your practice **simple**, **reliable**, and **personal**.

It's your time and relationship with God; not mine (or anyone else's) passed on to you. If you persevere, it will become holy, powerful, and intimate. Enjoy!

Helpful Companions to Your Daily Reading Practise

What to Read and Who to Listen To

Outside of your scripture reading routine, there are many authors, preachers and teachers that can be a great aide and inspiration for you. Listening to teaching and preaching is a vital part of our growth and equipping as followers of Christ. This is most of what Jesus spent His ministry years doing – teaching and preaching on the go. However, the internet is also a powerful tool to popularise many messages and communicators that are not good for you. Some get side-tracked with controversies that don't help you love God, know Him, and love others. Some are simply not very grounded in scripture, and there are even some who purposely distract people from the truth or manipulate it for some other agenda.

Here are some authors and teachers I think are reliable and inspiring.

Timothy Keller.

The late Timothy Keller was a Presbyterian minister and author. His teaching is orthodox (traditionally or generally accepted beliefs of the Christian faith), and brings great insight, and helps ground the teachings of Jesus in modern day culture and issues. Timothy is very easy to listen to and has good content. You can find some of his messages at:

<https://podcast.gospelinlife.com/>

Also, in their 'subscribe' tab, you'll find links to podcast hosting sites.

Bill Johnson.

Bill is an author, and the Senior Leader at Bethel Church in Redding, California.

Bill has been a great encouragement and resource to me personally. He brings a depth of insight that is only available through a relationship with the Holy Spirit. He brings the heavenly reality of joy and power, to our earthly reality of labour and sorrow.

Many teachers try to investigate the 'Kingdom of God' that Jesus revealed. But Bill has spent his life pursuing the *reality* of that Kingdom on earth and provides valuable insights.

You can find many of his messages on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@BillJohnsonMinistries>

Also, you can listen via different podcast providers, as well as via Bethel Church's weekly sermon podcast: <https://www.podcastics.com/podcast/bethel-redding-sermon-of-the-week/>

John Bevere.

John is a teacher of the Word who has authored many helpful books and has many online messages and pod casts. <https://johnbevere.com/>

Mark Sayers.

Mark has a knack for finding God's leading and interaction with the changing culture of the western world. He gets you thinking about the world you live in and your Kingdom part in it.

<https://marksayers.co>

Specific Books:

- **'The God I Never Knew'** – Philip Yancey. A fresh way of seeing Jesus.
- **The Pursuit of God**, A.W.Tozer. This is a Christian classic and a short read. Although written over 50 years ago, it's so relevant for today – a call to the church to return to the pursuit of the Presence of God.
- **The Chronicles of Narnia**, C.S.Lewis. Fantasy Novels! But with the Gospel woven through. These are an easy read and a colourful way of thinking about the biblical theme of redemption and destiny.
- **Huia Come Home**, Jay Ruka. Jay Ruka offers a fresh perspective on the narrative of Aotearoa; a tale of two cultures, warring worldviews, and the things we lost in translation. With our new government and the confusing war of words and worlds, this book helps us stay tethered to what God is doing through our local history, and the treasure of cultures and differences present in Aotearoa, NZ.
- **The Triumph of Christianity**, Rodney Stark. Acclaimed religious and social historian Rodney Stark explains how an obscure Jewish sect became the largest religion in the world and presents the real story behind the tragedies and triumphs that have shaped the trajectory of the Christian faith—and indeed, much of global history. The content will require more 'chewing' than a quick 'sip', but for those interested in both historical context and the historical story of the Christian faith, this is an excellent resource.

And remember, our church has hundreds of messages on our
'Legacy Community Church' YouTube channel:
www.youtube.com/@legacycommunitychurch8126

Or head to our website to find the link



52-58 Bassett St. Burwood, Christchurch
Email: office@legacycommunity.nz
Ph. 03 3834895

www.legacycommunity.nz