

# READING THE BIBLE IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION

## JOHN WESLEY'S GUIDELINES

How did John Wesley read the Bible? The best known passage where he answers this question is in the preface to the first volume of his *Sermons*, which begins:

I want to know one thing, the way to heaven--how to land on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written down in a book!... Let me be *homo unius libri* [a man of one book]. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone: only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end, to find the way to heaven.

**Practice Daily.** By submitting to this discipline, we become rooted in Scripture and it takes root in us.

**Go Small.** By moving through small portions at a time, we are able to focus our minds and hearts more intentionally, and soak in what we are reading.

**Listen + Obey.** Read with a focused purpose to know the will of God and a fixed resolution to do it. Ask for the wisdom to understand God's direction and the courage to do it.

**Follow the Story.** The great themes run like a thread through the Bible. Keep watch for them. How does the passage at hand point to the larger story?

**Pray.** The same Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture continues to inspire the reading of it today. Begin your reading with prayer for understanding. End Your time with prayer for application and transformation. Ask that the seeds of truth will give way to the fruit of growth.

**Pause and Act.** When finished, we should pause and reflect On what we have heard and what it means for our lives. Then in humble obedience, we should actively live it out.

## STEP BY STEP APPROACH TO BIBLE READING

The purpose of reading anything is to gain knowledge of the subject being read. So it is with the Bible, we gain knowledge of the Scriptures. Knowledge of the Scriptures means nothing unless we have a clear understanding of them and turn that understanding into how we live our lives. John Wesley has given us a way to read the Scriptures in a way that we are able to to apply them to our daily lives. This method has seven steps that if followed we will have our lives changed in ways that we cannot now know.

## **FROM THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE**

The Bible is inspired and given by God to the Church in order for Christians to know God through personal and corporate salvation (soteriology). Even my use of the word “know” in the previous sentences has different meanings. *[By “know” when referring to things, I’m essentially referring to the use of my brain to accumulate facts. But by “know” when referring to God, I mean encountering God and relating to him in a way made possible by the sacrificial atonement of Christ on the cross.]* We believe the whole canon is a gift from God, inspired to lead us to an intimate relationship with God individually and corporately, and to transform us into God’s image, individually and corporately. *[Italics mine.]*

## **THE SEVEN STEPS IN ACTION**

**Practice Daily.** By submitting to this discipline, we become rooted in Scripture and it takes root in us. *There is no excuse here.*

**Go Small.** By moving through small portions at a time, we are able to focus our minds and hearts more intentionally, and soak in what we are reading. *By reading only the reading assignment will keep us focused on the assigned reading.*

**Listen + Obey.** Read with a focused purpose to know the will of God and a fixed resolution to do it. Ask for the wisdom to understand God’s direction and the courage to do it. *At this step we need to respond in writing what the Scripture means to me.*

**Follow the Story.** The great themes run like a thread through the Bible. Keep watch for them. How does the passage at hand point to the larger story? *Observe the common theme in the readings.*

**Pray.** The same Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture continues to inspire the reading of it today. Begin your reading with prayer for understanding. End Your time with prayer for application and transformation. Ask that the seeds of truth will give way to the fruit of growth. *See the included prayers.*

**Pause and Act.** When finished, we should pause and reflect On what we have heard and what it means for our lives. Then in humble obedience, we should actively live it out. *This means quiet meditation. Failure to meditate will destroy what we have learned today.*

### Prayer to be Read Prior to Reading the Bible

O gracious and loving God, thank you for what you have been doing in my mind and heart. I now turn to you seeking to be open and receptive to what I will be reading today. Help me to be responsive to your leading in the ways of spiritual reading that will open me to your living word. Amen.

### Prayer to be Read Upon Completion of Daily Reading

Thank you dear LORD for your gracious help in these readings. I am sure that your help has helped me to better understand your Word in a way that I can apply it to my daily living. Amen

## **DAILY ACTION**

There will be three Scripture readings each day. One will be from the book Psalms, one from the Old Testament, and one from the New Testament. Gather your Bible notebook and pen or pencil. Next read the prayer that is the prayer to read before reading your Bible. Next sit quietly awaiting the presence of God, then prayerfully read the first Scripture on the daily list. Sit quietly for a short moment thinking about what you have just read the Scripture again, and again. Try to understand what you have just read. Ask the question what is the major point, what does it really say? Then ask the question how does it affect me? What action do I need to take? Having made that decision, write it in your notebook. This fulfills Wesley's requirement to "Act"

Having now completed the first Scripture read and treat the next two Scriptures in the same manner. Now comes the big test, write a summary of how the readings are tied together.

## **THE READING LIST**

The daily reading list comes from the "Revised Common Lectionary" So what is the Lectionary and how do we get it? The word lectionary is 'a list or book of portions of the Bible appointed to be read at a church service.' So how do we get this information? Go to [Revised Common Lectionary Daily Readings for Year B](#) there you will find a list of daily readings. Print page three. This will give you reading thru Wednesday March 24, 2021.

## **FORMAT**

Today's date

Scripture to be read (book, chapter, verse/s.)

Title Not available in all books

Response: Write the action you think you need to take.

Do this for each of the scriptures read.

Then write a *summary* explaining the relationship of the readings.

Then read the prayer for after reading the Scriptures.

## **EXAMPLE**

Date January 28, 2021

Scripture Jn. 9:1-12

Title Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

Response: We never know when Jesus will meet us, therefore we need to be alert and ready to answer.

vv 13-34

Title The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

Response: When we see a miracle we should not doubt, but thank God for his mercies.

vv. 35-41

Title Spiritual Blindness

Response: The only way that my spiritual blindness can be cured is believing in Jesus, for he is the light of the world

.Summary: Jesus leads us from the darkness to the light.

## **CONCLUSION**

Having followed these steps day after day we will grow in our faith and our lives will be changed in ways that we could have never imagined. Glory be to God.