

## Reading an Entire Book



In this method you will study an entire book of the Bible. If you've never done this before, start with a small book, preferably from the New Testament. The book of James, Titus, 1 Peter, or 1 John are all good choices for first-timers. Plan to spend 3-4 weeks studying the book you have chosen.

Next you'll spend some time, perhaps several days, reading through the entire book. Do this more than once. As you read, look for themes that may be woven into the chapters. Sometimes you'll detect a general message in the book. For example, in the book of James, an obvious theme is "Persevering through Trials." Take notes on the ideas that jump out at you.

Look also for "life application principles." An example of a life application principle in the book of James is: "Make sure my faith is more than just a statement - it should result in action." It's a good practice to try and pull out these themes and applications on your own as you meditate, even before you begin using other study tools. This gives an opportunity for God's Word to speak personally to you.

### Zoom In

Now you will slow down and read the book verse by verse, breaking down the text, looking for deeper understanding. Hebrews 4:12 begins with, "For the word of God is living and active..." (NIV) Are you starting to get excited about Bible study? What a powerful statement!

Now let's see what it looks like under a microscope, as we begin breaking down the text. Using a Bible dictionary, look up the meaning of the word living in the original language. It is the Greek word 'Zaō' meaning, "not only living, but causing to live, vivifying, quickening." You start to see a deeper meaning: "God's Word causes life to come about; it quickens." Because God's Word is alive, you can study the same passage several times and continue to discover new, relevant applications throughout your walk of faith.

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### Choose Your Tools

As you continue to do this type of verse by verse study, there's no limit to the wealth of understanding and growth that will come from your time spent in God's Word. For this portion of your study, you will want to consider choosing the right tools to aid you in your learning, such as a commentary, lexicon or Bible dictionary. A Bible study guide or perhaps a study Bible will also help you dig deeper. Check out my Top 10 Bibles for

suggestions on great Bibles for Bible study. Also check out my top Bible commentaries for suggestions on choosing a helpful commentary. There are also many useful on-line Bible study resources available, if you have access to a computer for your study time.

### **Be a Do-er of the Word**

Scripture says, “Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (Jas. 1:21-22 ).

Sometimes we go through the motions of devotions. We look into the mirror of God’s Word without doing anything about what we see there. “Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like” (Jas. 1:23-24).

Not only must we read, hear, and know God’s commands, we must devote ourselves to them in surrender of our hearts and in our deeds. “The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does” (Jas. 1:25 ).

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### **More Than Intellectual Prowess**

For spiritual formation, it’s vital to practice reading the Bible formationally rather than only informationally. Academic study has its place; the truth is, however, that we can be Bible scholars and avoid transforming our lives. To be transformed by scripture, one lets go of all preconceived ideas and allows God to speak personally through the Word.

In order to be nourished by God’s Word (Deuteronomy 8:3) in this way, we are given the image of tasting, chewing, imbibing, partaking. It is much more than intellectual cognition of truth. It is the personal experience of truth. Those words we study are sweet, meaningful, nourishing (also see, Psalm 119:103).

Then, having been nourished by God’s words, we are sent by God to speak His words. We are to take heart (personally) to what we have eaten and then we are to “regurgitate” what has nourished us to others.

Whether they listen or not, we speak what we have been nourished by. So, what you being nourished by this week?\_

What words is God speaking into your life?

How are those words coming forth for the well being of others?

