

Bible Reading as a Spiritual Practice

Getting Started

If you are in need of a Bible, the Common English Bible is widely being used by United Methodist curriculum writers today. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is the best scholarly translation. If you are looking for a study Bible, the Wesley Study Bible (published by Abingdon Press) is excellent. Methodist and Wesleyan scholars wrote the notes, and it is available in both the Common English and NRSV translations. If you prefer to read your Bible online, <https://www.biblegateway.com/> has many translations in various languages. <https://www.enterthebible.org/> is an excellent web site (developed by Luther Seminary, an ELCA seminary in St. Paul, MN) which provides brief overviews of each book of the Bible.

Bible reading as a spiritual practice is one way God's grace and love comes to us (in Wesleyan language, scripture reading is a "means of grace.") Approach Bible reading as a way God is speaking to you, and as an occasion for a daily conversation with God. Begin and/or end your Bible reading time with prayer.

Bible Study Options

1. Read a Psalm a day. Read it several times, including once out loud. Linger on a word or phrase that speaks to you. Listen for what God might be saying through that psalm.
2. There are "red letter" versions of the Bible that have Jesus' words in red. Start your Bible reading practice by reading the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Begin with the gospel of Mark (it is the oldest of the four gospels, the shortest and the easiest to read). Read 10-20 verses a day. Ponder these questions: what word or phrase stands out for you? What might God be telling you in this passage? What is God calling you to **do** through this passage?
3. Choose a book of the Bible to read. Take it a chapter at a time. Ask 1) what does this passage say about God? 2) What does this passage say about human beings? 3) What does this passage say about the relationship between God and human beings?
4. Use the *Upper Room* Devotional. These are available at church and can also be read free online. There is a daily Bible reading, a story and suggested prayer focus. You can also order *The Upper Room* in print, email or audio formats. Go to <http://devotional.upperroom.org/> to learn more.