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SIX STEPS TO

READING YOUR BIBLE

PRACTICAL TRAINING
FOR SMALL GROUPS



 **SIX**
STEPS TO
READING
YOUR BIBLE

TONY PAYNE
AND SIMON ROBERTS

 **matthiasmedia**

Six Steps to Reading Your Bible

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INTRODUCTION

“**H**ow sweet are your words to my taste,” says the psalmist about the law of God, “sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Ps 119:103).

Most Christians would acknowledge that the Bible is indeed the sweet and satisfying word of God, but somehow it doesn’t always feel this way. Too often, reading the Bible feels like our attempts to have regular exercise—a healthy chore we know we should fit in, but which is hard to manage amongst everything else, and ends up slipping off the agenda.

The research on Bible reading among contemporary Christians certainly doesn’t make very happy reading. If there are ten people in your small group using this course, six of them either never read the Bible or do so only very occasionally. A further two read the Bible once a week or a few times a week. Only two of the ten read the Bible every day, or most days.

Why is it like this? Is it lack of motivation? Lack of discipline? Lack of knowing where to start? Lack of confidence?

Whatever your current Bible reading habits (or lack of them), and whatever your level of knowledge and confidence, *Six Steps to Reading Your Bible* will help you make progress in getting into your Bible. The course is especially designed for use in small groups, and utilizes a mix of video instruction, Bible study, discussion, practical exercises, prayer and assignments.

Over the six sessions of the course, you will:

- become familiar with the basic shape and nature of the Bible, and some important facts about it
- understand why we should read the Bible, and be motivated to do something about it

- learn some simple steps and methods for applying basic reading skills to the Bible
- learn not only how to work out what a Bible passage means, but how it applies to your life
- begin to develop some good regular Bible reading habits through instruction, discussion and practice
- develop confidence that you can read and understand the Bible for yourself
- understand how the whole message of the Bible hangs together and centres on Jesus
- benefit from the encouragement and experience of others, as you work together in learning to read the Bible.

May this short course help you discover (or re-discover) the sweetness of feeding from God's written word, and equip you to keep feeding from it for a lifetime.

Tony Payne and Simon Roberts
May 2008

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

Quiz¹

1. The Bible contains:
 - a) 22 books
 - b) 39 books
 - c) 56 books
 - d) 66 books
2. The Bible was written over a period of about:
 - a) 1500 years
 - b) 2000 years
 - c) 2500 years
 - d) 6000 years
3. The Bible was originally written in:
 - a) Aramaic, Hebrew and English
 - b) Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic
 - c) Latin, Hebrew and Greek
 - d) Egyptian, Hebrew and Latin
4. The book of Hebrews is:
 - a) in the Old Testament
 - b) in the New Testament
 - c) not in the Bible

1. Answers can be found on page 12.

5. Abraham:
- a) built an ark
 - b) led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt
 - c) almost killed his own son
 - d) committed adultery with his neighbour's wife



Video: The holy bookshelf

Notes on video

Major Old Testament groupings:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Major New Testament groupings:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



Bible study

Read Exodus 19:1-9a.

1. Who met with God on the mountain?
2. How did God's word reach the people?
3. Did the people hear the word of God themselves?

Read Hebrews 1:1-4.

4. How did God speak long ago?
5. How has God spoken in these last days?
6. What is similar and different about the ways that God has spoken?



Video: The one word

Notes on video



To conclude

Pray that over the coming weeks God would make you more motivated, skilled, confident and disciplined to read your Bible. Pray that you would learn from and enjoy the assignment for the week ahead.



Assignment

This course aims to make you a better Bible reader, and there's no way to do this without actually reading the Bible! So each week you will be asked to read five Bible passages. Five is a very achievable number and means that if you miss reading on one or two days in the week, you won't fall behind. However, if you want to read your Bible every day (and we encourage that desire), you can always supplement the five readings by reading more from the same book, or by reading the passage that will be studied in church on Sunday.

This first lot of five readings are from the Gospel according to Mark. Simply read the passage and ask yourself what it tells you about Jesus.

Passage	What does it say about Jesus?	Completed
Mark 1		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mark 2		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mark 3		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mark 4		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mark 5		<input type="checkbox"/>

Quiz answers: 1=d, 2=a, 3=b, 4=b, 5=c.

LEADER'S NOTES

Six Steps to Reading Your Bible is not a difficult course to run. The concepts are not complicated, and the format of each session is simple enough. Each session contains some combination of video input, Bible study, discussion and prayer.

As in all such studies, your role as leader is to facilitate, to direct, to guide, and to be an example for the group members to follow. In particular, be aware that your enthusiasm for God's word, your prayerfulness and your example will all have a powerful effect in reinforcing the message of the course. It's important, for example, that you do the 'Assignment' readings each week, and are ready to share what you learned.

In preparing for each session, make sure you work through the material for yourself beforehand, especially the Bible study sections. In the following notes you'll find:

- a summary of the goal of each session
- a guide as to the timing of each element so as to complete the session in an hour
- space to plan your own timing for each section.

SESSION 1: WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

Goal of the session

Many Christians are a bit daunted by the Bible. It's that big book over there that they know is important, and that they should read. Somehow they don't often get around to it.

In this first session, the goal is to begin to ease this sense of 'distance' from the Bible by starting to get more familiar with it—as a collection of books, and as the word of the true and living God. The session is essentially in two halves looking at these two aspects of the Bible: that on the one hand it is a collection of human books, of many different kinds, by different authors, written over a long period of time; and yet at the same time, it's a unified book with one ultimate author—God himself.

The Bible study passages from Exodus 19 and Hebrews 1 focus on how God has spoken to his people—through spokesmen like Moses in the Old Testament, and finally and wonderfully through his own Son. Hebrews 1 is a marvellous big picture passage for showing the unity and purpose of God's speech. It's varied, but at the same time united in authorship and direction.

Outline of the session with timing

Activity	Suggested timing	Your timing
Quiz	3 min	
Video: The holy bookshelf	5½ min	5½ min
Bible study: Exodus 19:1-9 and Hebrews 1:1-4	15 min	
Video: The one word	4½ min	4½ min
Discuss: Implications of dual nature of Bible	15 min	
To conclude	5+ min	
Assignment (briefly discuss)	5 min	



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*To serve our Lord Jesus Christ, and the growth of his gospel in the world,
by producing and delivering high quality, Bible-based resources.*

It was in 1988 that we first started pursuing this mission together, and in God's kindness we now have more than 250 different ministry resources being distributed all over the world. These resources range from Bible studies and books through to training courses and audio sermons.

To find out more about our large range of very useful products, and to access samples and free downloads, visit our website:

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SIX STEPS TO TALKING ABOUT JESUS



Think of the people around you: your family, your workmates, the man at the newsagency, your neighbours. Is there a single one of them who doesn't need to be following Jesus?

Yet like so many Christians, do you feel uneasy about reaching out to people? Perhaps you feel unsure about where to start and what to say?

Six Steps to Talking about Jesus is a short course that goes back to square one, and helps you make a start. Over six interactive sessions you'll look at:

- the core motivation for reaching out to others
- how to depend on God in prayer
- how to invite people to read a book or come to an event
- how to tell your own story of what God has done for you in Christ
- how to explain the gospel of Jesus in a simple way.

This is a course designed to be done in a small group context, and does not require an 'expert leader'. It is ideal preparation for a church mission.

To run the course you will need:

- a workbook for each person, which also contains notes for group leaders
- a DVD to use in the group.

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SIX STEPS TO ENCOURAGEMENT



God has given every Christian an enormous privilege and gift: the power to speak his life-changing word into the lives of other people. Every Christian can be a channel of encouragement.

In *Six Steps to Encouragement* you'll learn the why and how of personal encouragement. Through video input, Bible study, practical examples,

discussions and hands-on exercises, you'll discover how to bring life, hope and strength to those around you by bringing the powerful word of God to them. You'll also work through practical case studies such as welcoming newcomers, listening, rebuking, and dealing with suffering.

"Like Matthias Media's other foundational course, *Two Ways to Live*, *Six Steps to Encouragement* is a course that deserves to see wide usage. Like *Two Ways to Live*, it is well-rounded, flexible, thoroughly biblical, and will enable many to speak God's word to others with confidence and courage." *Southern Cross*, February 2005

Six Steps to Encouragement is a six-session course, best undertaken in a small group (of 6-10 people). To run the course you will need:

- a workbook for each person, which also contains notes for group leaders
- a DVD to use in the group.

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THE DAILY READING BIBLE

Time to get back into regular Bible reading? *The Daily Reading Bible* has everything you need to get started, and in one compact, portable package.

Each volume contains around 60 readings. Each reading is designed to take around 15-20 minutes, and contains:

- the full text of the Bible passage for that reading
- some questions to get you thinking
- some 'points to ponder'
- some ideas to get you started in prayer.

All this in one booklet that you can take with you anywhere—on the train, on the bus, to the park at lunchtime, or to your favourite armchair.

VOL	CONTAINS READINGS FROM ...
1	Matthew 5-6, Joshua, 1 Corinthians 1-4
2	1 Corinthians 5-7, Malachi, topical passages about God's trinitarian characteristics
3	Genesis 1-11, 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews 1-7, topical passages about Jesus
4	Matthew 8-16, Nehemiah, Hebrews 8-13
5	James, Genesis 12-35, topical passages about the atonement
6	Ephesians, Lamentations, Proverbs
7	1 Peter, Zechariah, Revelation 1-3, topical passages about our present suffering
8	John 1-12, Hosea, studies on words
9	John 13-21, Isaiah 1-12, Philippians
10	1 Timothy, Exodus 1-18, topical passages on the Christian calling
11	2 Peter, Genesis 36-50, Ecclesiastes, topical passages on the image of God
12	Elijah, Matthew 1-4, 1 Thessalonians
13	Luke 1-6, Amos, 2 Corinthians
14	Luke 7-9, Micah, Galatians
15	Luke 9-15, Jonah, 2 Timothy

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- learn how to apply a Bible passage to your life
- understand how the whole message of the Bible hangs together and centres on Jesus
- benefit from the encouragement and experience of others, as you work together in learning to read the Bible.

Six Steps to Reading Your Bible is a course best undertaken in a small group (of 3-8 people).

To run the course you will need:

- a workbook (like this one) for each person, which also contains notes for group leaders
- a DVD to use in the group.

About the authors

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