

HOW TO

Read the Bible

A Simple
Guide to
Deeper
Intimacy
with God

Discussion Guide



W PUBLISHING GROUP

Getting Started

The goal of these sessions is to create a deeper connection with God through intentional engagement with His Word in community. By utilizing practical tools like the MAPS method, your group will be empowered to approach Scripture with clarity and purpose, allowing it to speak into their lives in meaningful and transformative ways. These sessions serve as a foundation for building lasting habits of Bible study.

Over these 7 sessions, we'll start by addressing some of the most common reasons why so many people *don't* study God's Word, and we'll see why we need this Word more than anything else in this world. Then, after considering a few dangerous approaches to studying Scripture, we'll walk through a dependable, simple, four-step guide to studying God's Word that you can put into practice every day.

As you take these steps with the help of the Holy Spirit, your life will completely change as you experience the awe, wonder, beauty, majesty, and intimacy of a love relationship with God himself.

*Each session of this discussion guide focuses on a chapter of *How to Read the Bible* by David Platt. It begins with creating space for reading and mediating on the session's key verse(s) before the group is invited into the content and discussion questions.*

A Note From the Author

Your view of the Bible completely changes when you realize that it's a revelation of God's love for you.

In the coming sessions, we'll explore how the Bible is a priceless treasure that reveals God's pursuit of and love for you. Your soul is designed to delight in the Word of your Creator. I want to show you how to experience this delight—the indescribable, supernatural thrill of hearing God speak personally to you. Ultimately, I want to help you read, study, and understand the Bible in such a way that you fall deeper and deeper in love with its Author every single day.

David Platt



This discussion guide has been adapted from *How to Read the Bible* by David Platt, copyright 2025.

SESSION 1

WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

Psalm 19:7-11

No matter if a Christian is new to faith or has been following Christ for years, there are common reasons people cite for not reading the Bible, such as:

- Not seeing how it applies to their life
- Trying to read it but getting bogged down and giving up
- Thinking it's meant to be studied only by clergy
- Saying they don't have time to read it
- Questioning its validity
- Admitting they simply don't want to study it

Read Chapter 1's gentle counterpoints to these considerations and the question, "What might happen if we took the time to feast on Scripture instead of all measly morsels the world offers us? Might our taste buds change?"

Discussion Questions

1. Looking at the six common reasons for why Christians don't study the Bible, which can you relate to the most? Why?
2. What might be some "measly morsels" the world offers that distract us from feasting on Scripture? How do these compare to the deep fulfillment God promises through His Word?
3. Chapter 1 challenges the idea that the Bible is meant only for clergy or scholars. How does understanding the Bible as accessible to everyone shift your perspective on reading and applying it in your daily life?

Notes

SESSION 2



HOW NOT TO STUDY THE BIBLE

Psalm 119:162

Approaching the Bible without the proper perspective is bound to end up making it a fruitless exercise that ends in frustration. Some of the “dangerous” approaches that don’t work include:

- The emotional: *what feels good to me?*
- The pragmatic: *what works best for me?*
- The spiritual: *what deep, hidden meaning is there for me?*
- The superficial: *what does this mean to me?*

The common denominator in those questions is “me,” bringing a self-centered, consumeristic mindset to the Bible. By contrast, we’ll learn a much more dependable approach: the MAPS method that we’ll begin exploring in the next session.

Discussion Questions

1. Of the four “dangerous” approaches to reading the Scriptures explored in Chapter 2—emotional, pragmatic, spiritual, and superficial—do any resonate with you and your previous efforts to engage God’s Word? If so, in what ways?
2. How does shifting the focus from “me” to God change the way we approach the Bible? What might this look like in practice during your own Bible study?

Notes

SESSION 3

MAPS: MEDITATE

Psalm 1:1-3

This session introduces the importance of meditating on God's Word. David Platt lays out the key distinctions between reading the Bible and meditating on it, emphasizing that the latter encompasses deeper engagement, observing, noticing, listening, absorbing, comparing and contrasting, and poring over a passage of Scripture with a heart and mind toward letting it speak into our lives.

Take time to practice meditating on the session's key Scripture, Psalm 1:1-3. Invite participants to walk through these key questions together:

1. What does this passage teach about who God is and how God works?
2. What does this passage teach about who we are (or, more personally, who I am) and how we (or I) should live?
3. What does this passage teach about who Jesus is, why we (or I) need him, and what it means to follow him?

Discussion Questions

1. As you read Chapter 3, how would you describe the key differences between just reading the Bible and meditating on it?
2. Which aspect(s) of meditation do you find most appealing? The most challenging?
3. The author describes meditation as observing, noticing, and listening to what Scripture reveals. Which of these practices comes most naturally to you, and which feels like an area where you could grow?

Next Steps

Invite participants to share recommendations for well-crafted daily Bible reading plans. Make a plan to commit to an intentional reading goal.

Notes

SESSION 4

MAPS: MEMORIZE

Psalm 119:11

The second part of the M in MAPS is memorization, which dovetails and intertwines closely with meditation. Memorization is a form of meditation, as one leads into (and back to) the other. David encourages readers not to be intimidated by the idea of memorization but to start small (choose one verse) and build on that, keeping in mind that memorizing takes time, patience, consistency, and the belief that doing so is an effective way of hiding God's Word in your heart and soaking it into your mind.

Discussion Questions

1. The author advises starting small with memorization by choosing one verse each week (Chapter 4). How do you think this gradual but consistent practice might help you to grow spiritually over time?
2. Similarly, in what ways could memorizing Scripture positively impact various aspects of your life, such as relationships, career, confidence, facing temptation, and so on?
3. Where might you need to realign your time or priorities to make space for memorizing God's Word?

Next Steps

As a group, choose a verse or passage to memorize together and share practical ways to make Scripture memory part of daily life. Write out the verse you will be memorizing together in the space below.

SESSION 5

MAPS: APPLY

James 1:22-25

Noting that meditation and memorization in themselves are not the destination on this journey of engaging the Scriptures, the author turns to the importance of applying what we read. He anchors this chapter in James 1:22–25, which begins with the stark, direct exhortation, “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only.” As a guide toward becoming “doers,” David illustrates the “layers” of our lives where God calls us to put the truth of His Word into practice. From the inside out, they are:

- Heart
- Mind
- Affections
- Will
- Relationships
- Purpose

He then provides a reflection and a question for each of those six aspects of life, spurring us to apply the Bible by the power of the Holy Spirit to every layer of who we are. Take time to walk through these questions together as a group.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the application of God’s Word—becoming a doer, not just a hearer (James 1:22)—so important (Chapter 5)?
2. What step(s) might you take to shift from simply gathering information in the Bible to applying it toward personal transformation?

Next Steps

Invite group members to share a practical way they can apply their recent Bible reading to their daily life this week.

Notes

SESSION 6

MAPS: PRAY

John 15:7; Matthew 5:14-16

Moving on to the third step in the MAPS method for experiencing intimacy with God through studying the Bible, the author zooms in on the essential quality of prayer. When approached not as a one-way, information-gaining exercise but as a living, two-way conversation with God, studying the Word becomes much more exciting and effective. This chapter introduces another acrostic that helps readers pray through the Scriptures—P.R.A.Y.—then reflects on how each of those four aspects assists in going deeper in a verse or passage.

- PRAISE
- REPENT
- ASK
- YIELD

Invite the group to pray through Matthew 5:14-16 together using the PRAY acrostic. Take time for the group to connect with the Lord and listen for His voice.

Discussion Questions

1. What difference do you think praying through the Bible as you study it can make (Chapter 6)? Would you consider using David's acrostic PRAY (praise, repent, ask, yield) with a verse or passage and recording its impact on your study?
2. Reflecting on your current prayer habits, what would it look like to invite God into your Bible reading as an active conversation rather than a passive exercise? How do you think this could deepen your relationship with Him?

Next Steps

Encourage group members to pick a passage or verse in their reading this week and PRAY through it. Invite them to share the following week how this impacted their time in the Word.

Notes

SESSION 7



MAPS: SHARE

Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Mathew 28:19-20

After meditating on and memorizing scriptures in the Bible, applying the Word to our lives as led by the Holy Spirit, and praying through it as we study, the final and fitting step in MAPS is to share the truth, love, grace, mercy, and life-altering power of God's Word with those around us and even with others throughout the larger world.

One starting point that David has found helpful is journaling. As you "record the different ways God's Word applies to your life," you will grow in understanding, confidence, and preparation to share the difference studying Scripture has made in your life. We have the choice of whether to be a receiver (keeping the power of the Word to ourselves) or a reproducer (reaching out to help others experience it as well).

Discussion Questions

1. In Chapter 7, David delves into the final letter of his MAPS plan, sharing. Have you done any journaling (as he has), and if so, what benefits have you experienced?
2. The idea of sharing about Jesus can be intimidating. If this is ever true for you, what encouragement do you draw from David's focus on preparing to "talk about his Word when you sit, walk, lie down, and rise" (Deuteronomy 6)?

Next Steps

Challenge each person to think of one person they can share with this week.

Notes

Conclusion

Invite your group to reflect on the following questions:

1. Looking back at the entire book, how has your view of God's Word changed? Which aspect(s) of approaching Scripture using MAPS (Meditate/Memorize, Apply, Pray, Share) do you need to focus on carrying forward in your study of the Bible?
2. Finally, what commitment do you sense God leading you to make right now as part of your regular engagement with His Word in the days ahead?

Reflect on the past sessions and invite the group to set personal goals for continued Bible engagement.

1. In our own lives, let's *meditate* on and *memorize* God's Word;
2. let's *apply* God's Word to every layer of our lives;
3. let's *pray* God's Word with bold faith that God will give us what we ask; and
4. then let's *share* God's Word with the people right around us and with people around the world.

