

10 Practical Steps in Following Jesus

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Step 4: Reading God's Word

The need to mature

Now that you have become a Christian, you are a new creation, you are born-again (see II Corinthians 5:17). Spiritually you are like an infant or baby who needs to begin to grow in maturity. The Word of God tells us,

“Like new born babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”

(I Peter 2:2)

The milk referred to here is the Word of God (the Bible). We need to read this regularly, meditate on it and obey it. This is basic for Christian growth and maturity. Without it we will stay as spiritual babies and never grow.

What to do

It is important that you get at least a New Testament in a modern translation of the Bible. The easiest to read versions are the *Good News for Modern Man* or the *Living Bible*. The translation we recommend, however, is the *New International Version*. As Christians, we need to set aside time to read God's Word each day. In fact, we shouldn't let a day go by without reading some of the Bible. A good place to start reading is John's gospel in the New Testament. Read at least a chapter a day. Before you start to read, pray that God will show you more about Himself and what you are to do for Him. As you read ask yourself, 'What is God saying to me?' and remember to obey what He says to you. After you have finished the gospel of John either re-read it or go

on and read the rest of the New Testament before you start the Old Testament.

Suggestions:

- Underline any verses that God makes especially relevant to you. This will help you find them for future use.
- Have a pad and pen available so that you can write down anything you feel God is saying to you or anything that is helpful to your relationship with God.
- Memorise verses that are meaningful to you, especially the promises of God to us as believers.
- Don't struggle with too hard to understand verses. The Lord will show you the meaning eventually. You can also ask those in your local church for help.
- Your local church will probably have either house groups or a mid-week Bible Study. It will be helpful to you if you join these so as to increase your knowledge of God's Word.
- Daily Bible reading aids are available to help you read and understand the Bible. Ask your local church for details.

Getting direction

The Christian life is like a journey and God's Word is described as,

“... a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

(Psalm 119:105)

God will speak to us and guide us if we read and meditate on His Word (the Bible). The Bible is our maker’s handbook. It gives us instructions and helps us understand both God, who created us, and also who we truly are as individuals. The Bible also shows us how to please God in every area of our life and how best we can serve Him. We should therefore, take time to read and study it.

“The entrance of your word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”

(Psalm 119:130)

What can the Word of God do?

The Word of God can help us to overcome problems and confusions. It shows us how things really are because it is the truth of God revealed to us. You can trust the Scriptures.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(II Timothy 3:16,17)

The Word of God gives us food which will prepare us for eternity with God. It is our standard to measure the things of life against in order to assess whether they are of God and for God or not.

Can we trust the New Testament?

The following table shows the authenticity and reliability of the gospels compared with comparable secular literature.

ANCIENT WRITING	THE HISTORY OF THEOYDIDES	CAESAR’S GALLIC WAR	TACITUS HISTORIES	THE FOUR GOSPELS
A. Original Document Writers	460-400 BC	58-50 BC	Approx. AD 100	AD 65-90
B. Oldest Surviving Copy	AD 900 (+ a few first Century fragments)	AD 850	AD 800	AD350 (even earlier for fragments)
C. Approx. time between A. and B.	1,300 years (fragments 400 years)	900 years	700 years	300 years (fragments 50 years)
D. Number of current copies in existence today	8	10	4	Up to 2,000

It must be remembered that between 250-500 eye witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus were alive when Paul and other New Testament writers wrote their manuscripts. If the early church writings were false there would undoubtedly be evidence of challenges to their authenticity, and this is not the case. Secular writings of the time mention Jesus and do not contradict the four gospels. Also no archaeological discovery has cast any doubt on the truth of the Bible. These things all point to the reliability of the New Testament.

Questions and tips:

1. What four things does II Timothy 3:16,17 tell us the Scripture is useful for and what is God’s aim in this?

2. Read Joshua 1:7,8 and then answer the following:
 - a. Should we bother to read God's Word or rather just rely on what we think is right?
 - b. Should we only think about God's Word occasionally when we have the time?
 - c. Does God's Word actually relate to our daily lives, i.e. is it practical to help us to live?
 - d. What should happen as a direct result of meditating on God's Word?
3. What can the Scriptures do for you? (II Timothy 3:15)
4. What makes the Bible different from any other book? (I Thessalonians 2:13)
5. What will happen as we hold onto the teaching of Jesus as revealed in the Bible? (John 8:31,32)
6. What are we to let the Word of God (or the Word of Christ) do? (Colossians 3:16; Romans 15:4)
7. Jesus said, ``Man shall not live by bread alone'' so how else should we be fed and sustained? (Matthew 4:4)
8. How is the Word of God described? (Hebrews 4:12)
9. What does the Lord want us to do and what will be the result? (Psalm 1:1-3)

Prayer

Almighty God, I thank You that You have given us the Bible which is the Word of God revealed to us. I realise that I know so little about You and your plans for me and I want to know more. Help me to set aside time each day to read Your Word, the Bible, and as I read it enable me to learn more about You and what You want me to do for You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.