

Session 01: Read

Key Session Theme:

- The Scriptures are no ordinary book — in the Reformation, many believers were martyred to make them accessible to the everyday apprentices of Jesus. But despite the power of Scripture to form us into Kingdom people, many of us don't even read it.
- **Good news:** When we learn to view Scripture as Jesus did, and read it as a spiritual discipline, we can read in such a way that we meet Jesus himself on the page and are deeply formed to be like him.

Jesus' View of Scripture

- Jesus' view of Scripture was incredibly high.
 - He said things like, "Scripture cannot be broken." in John 10.¹
 - In Mark 12, he quoted Psalm 110 by saying, "David himself, *speaking by the Holy Spirit*, declared" ² Jesus is blatantly saying that this ancient text was God speaking through David.
 - Also in Mark 12, he rebuked the religious leaders by saying, "Are you not in error *because you do not know the Scriptures* or the power of God?"³
 - In Luke 24, there's a story of Jesus teaching two disciples on the road to Emmaus that in the Law and Prophets, the Messiah had to die. The disciples reflect, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"⁴

Why We Read the Bible

- For Jesus, there is a reciprocal relationship between the place of Scripture in our lives and the level of our formation into Kingdom people.
- We read the Bible because we have come to love and follow Jesus, and we know that

following Jesus and immersing our minds in the library of Scripture are inseparable.

- We trust the Scriptures because Jesus trusted them.

Reading Scripture for Formation

- There are two basic skills we need to develop as apprentices of Jesus:
- One is biblical interpretation (or hermeneutics); we need to learn how to study the Bible and understand what we're reading.
- The other is spiritual reading. Once we get our heads around the text, we need to learn how to read it not just with our heads, but with our whole person, not just informationally, but formationally.
- Both matter. But this Practice is going to focus more on spiritual reading, because our goal is not just to know the Bible, it's to read the Bible in such a way that we meet Jesus himself on the page and are deeply formed to be like him.

Key Scriptures and Context

- “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

—Matthew 5:17-19

- In Greek, fulfill is the word *plerosia*, which is used all throughout the book of Matthew for a prophecy from the Hebrew Scriptures coming to pass in Jesus. Jesus sees the entire story of the Bible as all leading to him.
- And Jesus is saying that the Bible, down to its smallest details, will hold true until everything is “accomplished.”
- If you don't disobey or dismiss the teachings of the Bible, but instead, you take them really seriously, in particular, Jesus' teachings on the Bible, and you devote your life to practicing them and teaching other people how to practice them, then you will grow into one of the great ones in the Kingdom of God.

Week 01: Companion Guide Summary

- **Practice:** Daily reading of Scripture.
- **Reach Exercise:** Read an entire biblical book in one sitting, alone or with members from your community.
- **Keep Growing**
 - Read: Chapters 01-02 of *Eat This Book* by Eugene Peterson.
 - Listen: Part 01 of the *Rule of Life* podcast series on Scripture.

Notes

1. John 10v35 (ESV)
2. Mark 12v36 (Emphasis added)
3. Mark 12v24 (Emphasis added)
4. Luke 24v32

Session 02: Meditate

Key Session Theme

- The fast-paced, click-bait-y reading that proliferates our modern experience has neurobiologically malformed our brains to read in a way that is fundamentally at odds with how Scripture was designed to be read.
- **Good news:** By slowing down and meditating on the Scripture, we can come to truly delight in reading it.

Meditation

- In Hebrew, the word for meditate is *hagah*.
 - It most literally means “to murmur,” likely referring to the ancient practice of reading Scripture in a quiet voice under your breath.
 - But *hagah* can also be translated as “to growl over.”
 - Think of a dog and its bone: In meditation, we do that with Scripture. We *hagah* it — we chew on it and get to the marrow of it.

Lectio Divina

1. **Read (*lectio*)** — Read slowly and intuitively. Pay attention to what comes to mind as you read.
2. **Meditate (*meditatio*)** — “Chew” on it. Re-read it a second or third time and reflect on the connections between the passage and your life and what God may be saying to you.
3. **Pray (*oratio*)** — Pray what you are hearing back to God.
4. **Contemplate (*contemplatio*)** — We look up from the text into the eyes of God himself. And we gaze upon him, gazing upon us in love.

Obedience

- Many teachers add a fifth step: incarnatio, or incarnation. You put flesh and blood on the passage. You translate the Bible into your life.
- It's not enough to just meditate on the Bible. You have to get it out of your head, and even out of your heart, and into your hands and feet. We learn through obedience.

Key Scriptures and Context

- Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

—Joshua 1v7-8

- Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither — whatever they do prospers.

—Psalm 1v1-3

- These two “canonical seams” do more than stitch together the library of Scripture. They teach us how to read Scripture: to “meditate on it.”

Week 02: Companion Guide Summary

- **Practice:** Practice *Lectio Divina*.
- **Reach Exercise:** Practice one small act of obedience to what you read.
- **Keep Growing**
 - Read: Chapters 03-04 of *Eat This Book* by Eugene Peterson.
 - Listen: Part 02 of the *Rule of Life* podcast series on Scripture.

Session 03: Study

Key Session Theme

- For us in the modern West, the library of Scripture has become a problem — an intellectual enigma or a moral stumbling block or yet another item on our “good Christian” to-do list — instead of the pathway to God it’s designed to be.
- **Good news:** By studying the Scriptures, we correct misreadings that would deform us from the life of love God intends for us.

Our Interpretation Matters:

- People often misinterpret Scripture to advance their own agenda. Jesus spent much of his time correcting misreadings of the Bible from the Pharisees — who were Bible scholars.
- We need to be constantly honing our interpretation so that we are not deceived.
- Study is the patient application of our minds and hearts to the process of learning what the text says, what it meant to the original audience, and what it all means for us today. It’s applying our minds and our hearts to really listen to God with a desire to obey whatever he says.

Four Challenges of Reading Scripture

1. **It was written in another language.** Languages don’t map perfectly over each other. All translation involves interpretation.
2. **It was written in another time and place.** Reading Scripture is a cross-cultural experience. If you don’t understand the cultural background, it can be incredibly easy to misread it.
3. **It was written by dozens of different authors in a variety of genres.** Scripture is not a book; it’s a library. And different types of literature convey truth in different ways. If we want to understand it, we have to read each writing in its genre to discover what the author intended to say.

4. **It was written over a period of 1,500 years.** We need to understand where each part of the canon fits into the larger story, or we will get lost in it.

How to Study

1. **Place yourself under gifted, trusted teachers.** Teachers play a key role in the Church of Jesus. Find teachers with good theology and way of life, and listen.
 2. **Build a library.** Collect your own resource books to study from.
 3. **Pick an area of study in your season.** This could be a book or it could be a biblical theme. Pick something and dig deep into it.
 4. **Don't go it alone.** Read alongside others or in community.
- The motivation for study must be love, not academic curiosity or spiritual showmanship.

Key Scripture Passage and Context

- Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone."' The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, 'I will give you all their authority and splendour; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.' Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."' The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."' Jesus answered, 'It is said: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

—Luke 4v1-13

- Notice how steeped in Scripture Jesus was: His mind and heart were so saturated with the Bible that it was the first thing that came out of him when tempted.
- And notice how cunning the devil was with Scripture: He quotes Scripture, too. But he slightly manipulates it to avoid the cross.

Week 03: Companion Guide Summary

- **Practice:** Study the Scriptures.
- **Reach Exercise:** Begin reading a piece of literary fiction.
- **Keep Growing**
 - **Read:** Chapters 05-06 of *Eat This Book* by Eugene Peterson.
 - **Listen:** Part 03 of the *Rule of Life* podcast series on Scripture.

Session 04: Memorize

Key Session Theme

- Many of us don't bother to memorize Scripture, thinking of Scripture memorization as what you do as a child, or as an unnecessary practice in light of technologies like Google.
- **Good news:** Through memorizing Scripture, we are empowered to meditate on God's truth all day long, forming our minds and hearts into the image of Jesus.

Memorize

- This practice of absorbing key passages of Scripture so deeply into our bodies that they begin to take up residence in our inner woman or man is called "memorization." And it is a key aspect of meditation.
- If Jesus needed to put Scripture to memory, how much more so do you and I?

What Memorization Can Do

1. **Hear God's voice.** One of the main ways God "speaks" to us is by bringing Scriptures that we've memorized to our minds.
2. **Renew our mind.** We become like what we meditate on. And there is no better way to fill our minds with what is true, noble, right, and pure than to memorize Scripture.
3. **Resist temptation.** When Jesus was in the wilderness and was tempted by the devil, what did he do? He calmly quoted Scriptures that replaced the devil's lies with the truth of God.
4. **Draw on God's strength in seasons of pain and suffering.** It's hard to comfort yourself well during suffering in real-time; you need to have it in you beforehand. You see this in Jesus on the cross. When he was under pressure, when he was squeezed, what came out of him? Scripture.

Remember

- Some scholars argue that the most common command in all of Scripture is "remember."

- All of us are prone to spiritual amnesia — to forget what we need to hear again and again. But we are commanded to remember. And there’s no better way to do that than to memorize.

Key Scripture Passages and Context:

- From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

—Matthew 27v45-46

- Jesus is quoting from Psalm 22. This was a Hebrew practice called a *remez*, where a Rabbi would quote the first line of a well-known passage, and expect his listeners to call the entire passage to mind from their memory.

- My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? ... ⁷ All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. “He trusts in the Lord,” they say, “let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.” ... ¹⁶ Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet ... ¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment ... ²³ You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

—Psalm 22

- Jesus is drawing to mind Psalm 22, this thousand-year-old prophecy of the coming Messiah’s death, and gaining strength from its literary power for himself and his followers to stand and face the cross and come out the other side.

Week 04: Companion Guide Summary

- **Practice:** Memorize a passage of Scripture.
- **Reach Exercise:** Identify a Psalm or a passage of Scripture that has been especially meaningful to you and put the entire passage to memory.
- **Keep Growing**
 - **Read:** Chapters 07-09 of *Eat This Book* by Eugene Peterson.
 - **Listen:** Part 04 of the *Rule of Life* podcast series on Scripture.