

four ways of reading scripture

FROM THE BEST OF CHURCH HISTORY

Here are four ways of reading Scripture that have been used by the global, historic church:

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina, meaning “divine reading” or “spiritual reading,” is a form of prayer that involves slow, meditative reading and reflection on a passage of scripture, focusing on listening and responding to God’s word. It’s a practice rooted in Christian tradition, with roots in monastic practices, and involves four steps: reading (lectio), meditating (meditatio), praying (oratio), and contemplating (contemplatio).

bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lectio-divina-beginners-guide

THE LECTIONARY

This is the most common approach to the daily reading of Scripture in the Catholic and Anglican traditions, as well as many Protestant streams, like those from the Presbyterian and Lutheran traditions. In this model, you read a daily curation of short verses or passages from the Psalms, the Gospels, the New Testament writings, and key parts of the Old Testament. Over the course of the year, the lectionary is designed to expose you to the major themes of Scripture and to immerse your mind and imagination in the broad sweep of the story of God. If you’re interested in following a lectionary, it is recommended that you explore the Common Lectionary from Bible Gateway, or BREAD (Breathe, Read, Encounter, Apply, Devote) from Bridgetown Church in Portland. The Bridgetown Church version is available at Amazon.com for \$15.

biblegateway.com/reading-plans/revised-common-lectionary-complementary/next

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE

This approach comes from the evangelical stream of the church. In it, you read a chapter (or a few chapters) every day in a regular quiet time, making your way through the entire Bible from cover to cover. Most versions recommend you do this over a year, but you can amend the timeline to two years, or two months, depending on your capacity. This can be a very helpful model for new Christians who are still learning the broad sweep of the Bible. If you choose this option, we recommend you use this reading plan and follow along with the videos from BibleProject.

HEARING SCRIPTURE READ OUT LOUD IN COMMUNITY

There is an approach that is not very common today but was the default mode in the early church: hearing longer portions of Scripture read out loud to your community in one sitting.

Take Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus; if you were one of the first followers of Jesus, you would not have pulled out your Bible and read a chapter of Ephesians each day for a week; that was not possible until over a thousand years later with the invention of the printing press. You would have gone to your house church on a Sunday night, and after the meal, you would have sat around the home’s courtyard, and one of the elders would have read the whole letter to your community; you would likely then talk about it, ask questions of the elders, and pray together. And while we are no longer an oral culture, this way of engaging with Scripture can be deeply formational both for you and your community. You can also augment this approach and read longer portions or entire books of the Bible in one sitting by yourself.

None of these four ways of reading Scripture are the “right” way; you may choose one based on your church tradition, or you may experiment with all four, or make up your own method.

other resources

FOR READING SCRIPTURE

The following resources were created to enhance your experience of the practice of reading Scripture, but they are entirely optional.

READ

Eat This Book, by Eugene Peterson.

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.

Blueletterbible.org A free online tool that gives you access to multiple Bible translations, commentaries, word studies, and original languages.

Biblegateway.org A free platform with multiple translations, keyword searches, and study resources for easy Bible reference.

Immerseible.com Immerse aims to help Christians read large sections of scripture, as we would other kinds of literature, to capture major themes and better understand the “meta-narrative” of Scripture.

The ESV Study Bible Provides detailed notes, cross-references, and theological insights with a focus on traditional Christian doctrines.

WATCH

The BibleProject has developed a series titled “*How to Read the Bible*.” This week, you are invited you to explore the first part, “*Intro to the Bible*” which includes four short episodes.

bibleproject.com/explore/category/how-to-read-bible-introduction/

- What is the Bible?
- The Story of the Bible
- Writing Styles of the Bible & Why They’re Important to Understand
- How the Bible Is Unique as Literature

*Please note: these episodes are only a few minutes long, fun to watch, and very helpful in learning to read Scripture.

BibleProject reading plans: bibleproject.com/reading-plans/

Examples:

The Character of God	6 days
Introduction to the Christian Faith	8 days
What Gives You Hope?	7 days
Trusting God Through Suffering	6 days
One Story That Leads to Jesus	1 year

LISTEN

Episode 03 of the Practicing the Way podcast:

practictheway.org/course-s3



Roseville Campus
2120 Lexington Ave N
Roseville, MN 55113

White Bear Campus
4604 Greenhaven Dr
White Bear Township, MN 55127

www.calvarychurch.us
651.487.2855