

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Whenever you read the Bible, make as many observations as you can. A common experience people have when reading the Bible is making new observations in a familiar passage. Why does this happen? Our perspective changes as we get older; hence, we notice things we didn't before. Also, the Holy Spirit is speaking through the text and may want to reveal something to us. Finally, we tend to cruise past details in biblical texts that don't immediately jump out to us, but the more we sit with the text, the more we will notice. So, give time to make plenty of observations, especially in a group setting. Those may be the ones we need to see the most.
2. Write down any questions the text raises for you. Ask questions like, "who is writing, what are they saying, why are they saying it, when in time are they saying it, and where are they saying it. A Bible with good introductions can answer some of those questions. The only dumb question is the one that isn't asked.
3. Be honest about anything that bothers you in what you read. Whatever is bothering you may be worth exploring in you, in the text, or in your understanding of what you're reading. Pray about it, wrestle with it, talk about it with others, and keep reading.
4. The Bible is a big, ancient book, and it's tricky to read. We may be confused about how to apply certain texts or how to bring them into our lives. It may be helpful to keep in mind that you are reading a story that comes to its climax in the person of Jesus. Like watching a movie where we already know the ending, read the Bible through the lens of Jesus' death, and resurrection can help keep us on the right path of reading and applying it.
5. If you are further along in reading the Bible, try reading larger selections of Scripture like the Gospel of Mark in one sitting (or two). Make notes in your Bible next to places where you have questions or underline parts you want to remember. Then go back and read the whole thing more slowly. A good study Bible may help orient your reading and help you pick up on themes and theological insights.
6. Get a good study Bible like the "NIV Cultural Background Study Bible". It can shed light on cultural differences that make a difference when we're trying to understand the text's meaning.
7. Read Scripture with your small group and talk about your observations and questions. This practice will produce the greatest learning and understanding.
8. Buy some commentaries. "The Bible for Everyone" series by Tom Wright and John Goldingay is great. They won't dive into all the technicalities of the text, but they'll give you a broad understanding of the passage. These works are a gift to the church from well-respected scholars on the New Testament and Old Testament.
9. You can read the Bible for 10 minutes or an hour. Some days you feel like God is speaking directly to you, and other days, you might feel like the text is saying nothing to you at all. That's OK. Not every interaction with the Bible will turn your life upside down, but if you keep reading, reflecting, and responding to God, you'll find your life slowly conforming to the life of Jesus.