

## Lesson Four Using the Bible

1. Set aside a specific time every day to read and meditate on the Bible.
2. Begin by reading in the New Testament. Read about the life of Christ in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Then go to 1 John and read it.
3. In the Old Testament, you might want to start with the Psalms or Proverbs. As your knowledge of the Bible grows, you can get into the books that are more difficult to understand books.
4. You may want to begin acquiring materials to help you study the Bible such as a Bible dictionary, a concordance, handbooks, and commentaries. They will help you understand and discover the meaning.
5. Read with an open mind and heart, and occasionally pause to pray while you read.
6. Expect to learn something new from the Bible every day.
7. It is helpful to keep a notebook handy to jot down new insights and references.
8. Be careful with any Bible text that *seems* to contradict what the rest of the Bible teaches. If there is something you do not understand, do not worry about it for the moment.
9. Whenever you encounter a difficult passage, ask your pastor or another mature Christian to help you understand it.
10. Always read with an attitude of reverence for God's Word.
11. There are Bible-reading/devotional books available that guide you in what to read each day.
12. If you want to read the Bible through in a year you can do it by reading three chapters each weekday and five on Sundays. Or, an average of 3.7 pages per day will also do it for a standard-size Bible.

**The importance of the Bible in your life:** It is very important that a new Christian establish the habit of reading the Bible regularly. It is a source of blessing, inspiration, guidance, and truth. The purpose of this lesson is to help you learn how to use it.

### The Structure of the Bible

**The Old and New Testament:** The Bible has two major divisions: The Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). The Old Testament deals with the way God revealed Himself before Christ came. The New Testament is centered on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

**The Books of the Bible:** Each of the Testaments is divided into "books." There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. There is a table of contents in the front of the Bible that tells on what page each of them begin.

**Sections:** The books of the Bible are grouped into sections. The first 5 books of the Old Testament contain the laws given by Moses. The next 12 books are the history of the nation of Israel. The following 5 books are classified as poetry. Then come 17 books of the prophets.

The New Testament contains the Gospels (life of Christ) in 4 books; Acts of the Apostles (history of the church in the first century); the 13 Epistles (or letters) of St. Paul to churches or individuals; the 7 General Epistles (letters written to the church in general by several authors); Hebrews (uncertain author); and Revelation (prophecy of the end of time).

**Chapters and Verses:** Each book is subdivided into chapters and verses.

### Bible References

**How to locate a specific passage in the Bible:** To locate a specific point in the Bible one must know the name of the book, the number of the chapter, and the number of the verse.

**Abbreviations:** In a Bible reference, the books are often abbreviated. Here are a few examples: Mt. = Matthew; Mk. = Mark; Lk. = Luke;

Jn. = John; Gen. = Genesis; Psa. = Psalm; Isa. = Isaiah; etc. There is not room to list all 66 here, but you will soon become accustomed to identifying them. There is usually a list of the books of the Bible on the first page, where you can find an abbreviation.

**Chapter and Verse:** In a Bible reference, the first number following the name of the book indicates the chapter, which is followed by a colon (:) and then the number of the verse, such as Jn. 3:16. If more than one verse is indicated, the beginning and ending verses are separated by a dash (Jn. 3:16-20). In the case separated verses are listed they are separated by commas (Jn. 3:16, 19, 21). If more than one book is used, they are separated by semi-colons (Psa. 23:1; Isa. 40:11).

**Dual Books:** In some cases there are two books with the same name. They are distinguished by a "1" or a "2" preceding the name of the book, such as 2 Corinthians, II Corinthians, or Second Corinthians.

**Cross-references:** Tiny little letters or numbers that appear in the text of a verse refer to footnotes (sometimes in a center column, sometimes at the foot of the page, or in a margin). In these notes you will find additional information or other references dealing with the same subject.

**The Concordance:** A concordance is an alphabetical listing of key words that list different places in the Bible where the same word may be found. It is helpful when you want to locate a given word or to follow a theme through the Bible. If you have a concordance available, check it out. Some Bibles include a concordance at the end.

### Practice

Using the directions above, write in the spaces below the references indicated (you may use abbreviations if you wish):

Hebrews, chapter 11: \_\_\_\_\_

The gospel of John, chapter 6, verses 35 to 40: \_\_\_\_\_

The first epistle of John, chapter 3, verse 18: \_\_\_\_\_

The epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 4 and verse 7: \_\_\_\_\_

Philippians, chapter 4, verses 4 to 7, and Psalm, chapter 9, verse 2: \_\_\_\_\_

See if you can find the following references in your Bible (New Testament only). Mark the box by the reference when you find it.

Mt. 5:3-12.    Mk. 10:27    Phil. 4:13    1 Cor. 10:13

### How the Bible Can Help Us

Write in the spaces below the ways the Bible helps us as suggested by each text:

1 Peter 2:2: \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 119:105: \_\_\_\_\_

2 Timothy 3:16: \_\_\_\_\_

### Questions to Ask About a Bible Passage

Trying to answer the following questions will help you understand the passage you are reading:

Who wrote this, and to whom?

Why was it written (purpose)?

What did it mean to the people to whom it was addressed? (At first, you may need some help to answer the above questions)

What does it mean today?

What is the message for me?

It also helps to read what is before a given passage and what follows it.

Is it ... ?

A **command** to be obeyed?

A **warning** to be heeded?

A **truth** to believe?

An **example** to follow or avoid?

A **promise** to be claimed?

**Classify the following texts according to the bolded words in the list above:**

Exodus 20:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Galatians 6:7 \_\_\_\_\_

John 20:31 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 6:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 3:20 \_\_\_\_\_