



Top Tips for Reading the Bible

1. Pray before you start.

You can keep it simple:

God of all times, peoples and places, guide me today, and every step of the way - as I read your Scriptures, and reflect on your love. Amen.

2. Learn how to find your way around.

Put tabs on the first page of each book in the Bible to help you find your way around and get familiar with the Bible's contents.

3. Appreciate the variety of what's in the Bible.

Catholic Bibles contain 73 books: 46 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. These include many kinds of literature (e.g. histories, adventures, songs, poetry, letters and family trees).

4. Don't skip the 'first series' – the Old Testament.

The Bible tells the story of God intervening in the lives of individuals, families, towns and nations. The story starts in the Old Testament with the history of the Jewish people.

5. Understand how truth is expressed in the Bible.

The Catholic Church teaches that the Bible is true because God is its author and he inspired the human writers. Many literary forms are used to tell God's message. e.g. the histories sometimes tell sad and shocking stories but these are included so we can learn how God reacts and teaches people. Symbolic language describes things in a non-literal way, such as the rivers clapping their hands to praise God (Psalm 98.8). The Psalmist is urging all of creation to praise God, not saying that rivers have hands.

6. Explore the different senses of Scripture.

Catholics believe that there are different senses to our understanding of the Bible. The literal sense using sound interpretation (thinking about when the text was written, what the main content is etc.) and the spiritual interpretation (thinking about how it fits into the unity of God's plan for the world and our response to this plan.)

7. Interpret the Bible using the three golden rules.

- 1) Pay attention to the unifying Biblical theme – to reveal God to us.
- 2) Read the Bible within the context of the living tradition of the Church.
- 3) Pay attention to how the Old and New Testaments relate to each other.

8. Listen to what the Bible has to say about itself.

E.g. Scripture is inspired by God and useful for our Christian life.
(2 Timothy 3.15-16.)

9. Recognise the Bible as food for your soul.

By reading the Bible we are nourished and sustained in our faith as St Bernard of Clairvaux says: 'The Word of God is a living bread, the food of the soul...'

10. Read the Bible with others.

We can help each other to understand what it is saying to us and to our world through praying and sharing the Scriptures together.