

Following Christ: The Bible



Slice F12

The Bible

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1 Memory Verse

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 The Bible

The word 'bible' comes from the Latin and Greek words for 'book' (*biblia* and *biblos*). The Bible is actually not a book, it is a library of 66 books written by 40 authors from a variety of educational and cultural backgrounds. These books were written over a time period of approximately 1 600 years, yet the Bible remains totally consistent in its message - God is dealing with mankind. The Bible is both the first book ever written and the greatest book ever written. It contains the answers to the most important questions of life: 'Who am I?', 'Why am I here?', 'Where am I going', and 'What is life about?' The Bible has been called 'the book of life' as it reveals the Messiah, the Lord and Saviour Jesus.

Some may become despondent and discouraged, perceiving the Bible to be a complex and difficult book to read and understand. There are three major aids to assist us in understanding the Bible:

- God gave us the Holy Spirit to assist us in growing closer to Him. The Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures, helping us to understand them as we persevere in faith, reading the manufacturer's handbook.
- There are study Bibles available, which help the reader put the books of the Bible in context and explain the writings of the authors.
- Attending church services, Bible studies and home groups where the word of God is taught and explained.

2.1 *Inspiration of Scripture*

The term 'fundamentalist' was derived to describe the Christian who upholds the belief that the Bible is infallible and inerrant. 'Inerrant' means there are no errors, 'infallible' means there can be no errors.' Church on the Way believes that the Bible has been inspired by the Holy Spirit, as described by Paul:

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2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

16 All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

The word 'inspired' here literally means, 'God-breathed.' This implies that the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the books of the Bible to record God's message accurately, in the writer's own words. The inspirational work of the Holy Spirit can be seen in the book of Exodus, where the Holy Spirit guided the craftsmanship of Bezalel and Oholiab, the builders of the Tabernacle. The apostle Peter writes on the inspirational work of the Holy Spirit, explaining:

2 Peter 1:20–21 (NIV)

20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. **21** For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The 66 books of the Bible are filled with guidance and instruction from God, written in numerous ways:

- Narratives of the lives of men and women, discussing behaviours that should be both emulated and avoided.
- History, which reveals God's hand on world events.
- Covenants and legal documents.
- Songs and poetry containing messages from God guide and correct his people.
- Prophecy revealing God's foreknowledge, His control over future events and the correction of His people.
- Many varieties of teaching for the development of the individual.

We must be mindful of the fact that because the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is an authoritative book, giving us the moral foundations upon which we can stand. The Bible speaks with God's authority to direct our faith and lives in every area it teaches about.

The humanist world rejects God's word and establishes man-made laws and rules to follow, rules that are arbitrary and change with the development of new philosophies. Their moral laws have no firm foundation and change according to the desires of the people.

2.2 Not a Law Book, but a Love Book

Some Christians become legalistic and live by a long list of '**do's**' and '**don'ts**;' they become modern-day Pharisees. These legalistic Christians forget the two most important commandments that were covered in Slice 5; Love the Lord Your God with all your heart

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and love thy neighbour as yourself. When a believer is yoked to Jesus, these two laws become a joy, not a burden.

Matthew 11:28–30 (NIV)

28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The Bible is a love gift to mankind, giving guidance to enable believers to have a close relationship with a holy, mighty God.

3 Why we Should Read the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NIV)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

The Apostle Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, emphasises the importance of reading the Bible. Here are five reasons:

- 1. Teaching:** The Bible is the Manufacturer’s handbook; it is given to us by a loving God to guide us in all things. Jesus is the Word of God and the example that all believers are to emulate. Jesus said:

John 8:31–32 (NIV)

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. **32** Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

- 2. Reproof:** When we read God’s word regularly, He can communicate with us through His word. The most important part of that communication is when He guides us to scriptures that highlight an area in our lives that needs correction. God reproves us through His word and moulds us into the image of His Son. The author of Hebrews writes:

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

12 The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

- 3. Training in righteousness:** Numerous narratives in Scripture expand on the lives of individuals who encountered God. There is so much to learn from these individuals in how they related to God and the consequences of their actions. We can learn from their successes and failures.

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- 4. Maturing:** As we continue to reread the Bible, we grow in our understanding of God's word and mature in our relationship with Him.
- 5. Inspiration:** No matter how many times you read the Bible, the Holy Spirit is always able to illuminate a new facet of scripture that will leave you in awe and wonder at the greatness of God. It was the Holy Spirit who inspired the scriptures, so it is the Holy Spirit who will also illuminate them for you. Continue to read your Bible and continue to be amazed.

4 The Old Testament

Thirty-nine books make up the Old Testament and are placed into three major divisions: The Law (Torah), the Prophets (Nevi'im) and the writings, beginning with the Psalms (Ketuvim). The Jews refer to the Old Testament as the *Tanakh*, an acronym from the first letters of the three divisions.

The Old Testament contains some of the most ancient writings ever preserved. Moses is the author of the Torah (Pentateuch) and he lived some 3 500 years ago. The Old Testament is important because:

- It presents great truths about God and humanity.
- It sets the background for the New Testament.
- It reveals God's covenant promises, the formation of the nation of Israel and the blessing that will extend from the nation to all the nations of the earth.
- It holds the foundation for Biblical prophecies, several of which are being fulfilled in our time or are yet to be fulfilled in the near future.
- It presents spiritual truths and lessons that apply to believers today.

5 The New Testament

The New Testament is made up of 27 books, with the four Gospels setting the foundation for the others:

The Four Gospels:

- **Matthew:** Written by the disciple who was once Levi, the tax collector. He wrote his gospel for the Jews, to show them that Jesus is the Messiah.
- **Mark:** Mark was the son of one of the Mary's (Acts 12:12), he was not a disciple and is believed to have recorded Peter's gospel message. The gospel was written

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for the Romans and shows Jesus to be an all-powerful man of action, who surpasses Caesar. The Romans considered Caesar to be a god.

- **Luke:** Luke is the only Gentile author of scripture; he was a Greek doctor and companion of Paul. Luke wrote his gospel for the Greeks, who continually strove for the perfect man and boasted of human intellect. In his gospel, Luke showed them the perfect man with the greatest intellect.
- **John:** The Gospel was written by the disciple John who, with his brother James, was one of 'the sons of thunder'. John's gospel is the gospel of spiritual life and is written for all mankind.

The Book of Acts: Acts records the growth of the early Church, and the book is sometimes referred to as the acts of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's letters: Paul, who was originally the zealous Pharisee, Saul, who persecuted Christians, changed his name after his miraculous conversion after his confrontation with Jesus on the road to Damascus. God used Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles, carrying the gospel message throughout his many travels in the Roman Empire. By the time Paul was beheaded by Emperor Nero in AD 65, he had written many letters to several churches, 13 of which are recognised as inspired writings and are recorded in the Bible.

General Letters: These are other letters from apostles and Christian leaders, such as Peter, James and John.

Revelation: The book of Revelation is apocalyptic, which means an unveiling of that which was previously hidden. It contains literal prophecies that record the Tribulation and the return of Jesus to establish His kingdom. This will be:

- **Temporal:** The Kingdom of God will be set up or established in history.
- **Divine:** God will set it up, not man.
- **Eternal:** This kingdom will never be destroyed or succeeded by another but will endure forever. Unlike all the kingdoms and empires that preceded it, it will not fall.
- **Consuming:** Jesus will eventually crush all other kingdoms and bring them to an end. He will then establish His Millennial Kingdom.

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6 Translations

Formal Equivalence Functional Equivalent Free

(Literal) (Dynamic)

(Paraphrased)

KJV	NASB	RSV	NIV	NAB	GNB	JB	NEB	TLB
NKJV	HCSB	NRSV		NJB	REB	NLT		The Message
		ESV						

Key:

KJV – King James Version

NKJV – New King James Version

NLT – New Living Translation NASB – New American Standard Bible

RSV – Revised Standard Version

HCSB – Holman Christian Standard Bible

NRSV – New RSV

ESV – English Standard Version

NIV – New International Version

NAB – NABRE Bible (RC)

NJB – New Jerusalem Bible

GNB – Good News Bible

REB – Revised English Bible

NEB – New English Bible

NLT – New Living Translation

JB – Jerusalem Bible

TLB – The Living Bible

Formal Equivalence: Translate directly to remain close to the ‘form’ of Hebrew and Greek, while still attempting to write in comprehensible English, often described as ‘literal translations’.

Functional Equivalent: Work to keep the meaning of the original Hebrew and Greek, while translating the words and idioms into flowing English language.

Both the Formal and Functional translations attempt to give an accurate rendering of the original language.

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Free: Will paraphrase scripture, attempting to translate the scriptural message from one language to another by using everyday words. The translation focuses on explaining the message and is less concerned with the exact words used by the author.

The choice of a personal Bible to read is a very personal one. It is best, however, to avoid the 'Free' translations. Although they may be an easier read, they may miss out on the depth of meaning held within the correct word use of scripture. For example, a free translation may exchange 'torch' for 'lamp' and, while the torch is powered by a battery, the lamp in Biblical times burned oil symbol of the Holy Spirit in scripture. So, the explanation of a person not having batteries for their torch to light their way, misses out on the crucial meaning of the scripture, being that they do not have the 'oil' of the Holy Spirit.

When studying scripture, it is always important to look at different translations and see how each translation translates the keywords of the sentence being studied. In Hebrew, for example, there are root words such as *Rosh*, which means 'head' or 'first,' but in Hebrew, the author may use the word to imply both meanings. This significance is lost to the reader as the translator chooses only one of the words.

The recommendation of CWay is to purchase a good study Bible, such as the ESV Study Bible. These Bibles will give explanations for the scriptures and also give context to the books you are reading. They also include maps, diagrams and tables, which further help the reader to understand the scriptures.

7 Scripture Memory

It is important to note that Jesus memorised scripture. Jesus, to strengthen His statements, would regularly quote scripture. He quoted 24 books of the Old Testament almost 180 times in the New Testament.

The *Following Christ* programme has required you to memorise scripture at each meeting. This has been done because it is an important exercise in internalising God's word, for the following reasons:

- Keeping the Word of God in our hearts helps us when we are confronted with temptation, thus making it easier to avoid sinful behaviour.
- All believers should have a ready defence of their faith (1 Peter 3:15) and to do so effectively requires that we memorise scripture. Speaking God's words instead of our own will give our message more authority and will harness the power that is in the Word of God (Isaiah 55:11; Hebrews 4:12; Jeremiah 23:29).
- God speaks to us through His word and the more scriptures that you read and memorise, the more the Holy Spirit can bring them to mind. This is especially true when you are coping with the stresses of daily life.
- Memorising Scripture gives us a better understanding of God and His will. When we know God's Word and obey it, we can experience God at a deeper level and

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experience the freedom that comes only through obedience (John 8:31-32, 14:21).
The more deeply we know God, the more deeply we know His will for us.

8 Practically

- Set aside a 'quiet time' to read your Bible every day.
- Keep up the good habit of memorising scripture and storing God's word in your heart.

9 Proclamation

'I declare that I will treasure the word of the Lord, I am mindful that God's word is the 'manufacturer's handbook' and is, therefore, a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. I am committed to daily spending time reading the Bible and to work at memorising scripture.'

10 Prayer

'Thank you, Lord, for the precious gift of Your Word, which leads Your children out of darkness into Your glorious light. I am grateful for the firm foundation on which I am now able to stand, being able to discern between truth and the deceptions of the evil one. Thank you also, that Your Word draws me into a deeper relationship with my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and I am able to commit my life into His loving Hands.'