



# WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

## LESSON 4: Spending Time in God's Word

### Lesson Focus:

**Reading the Bible helps us grow closer to God as we apply its teachings to our lives.**

God's people have been reading His Word for more than 2,000 years. The Bible is not meant to be read once and then placed back on the shelf. Reading the Bible is a lifelong journey for each follower of Jesus.

The Bible was inspired by God, which means that He communicated His thoughts directly to the writers. Because of this, everything written in the Bible is very important. We shouldn't read it quickly or read only the parts we like.

As God's children, we can grow in our faith by reading His Word. When we set aside time to read the Bible carefully and meditate\* on its words, we learn how to understand God and what He wants for us. God uses His Word to change our hearts and make us more like Him.

1. How has reading the Bible changed you or someone that you know?



**Artwork by anonymous Crossroads student**

## Spiritual Guidance

When someone first becomes a Christian, he or she receives the gift of God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives within that person and guides him or her. The Holy Spirit also helps believers hear God when He speaks to them through His Word.

\* An asterisk after a word or phrase indicates that it is defined in the Glossary of Terms on page 7.

As we read and meditate on the Bible, we can invite the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us. In his letter to the church in Corinth, the apostle Paul wrote that God shows His wisdom to believers through His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10).

When we pray for understanding and wisdom as we read God's Word, the Holy Spirit teaches us who God is and shows us what God wants for our lives.

Read **1 Corinthians 2:12–16**.

2. What does the Holy Spirit help us do?
3. What is one thing in the Bible that God has helped you understand through His Spirit?



Notes/Questions

## Meditating on God's Word

Because the Bible was written to the ancient Jewish people (the Old Testament) and the earliest followers of Jesus (the New Testament), it is important to understand what meditating on God's Word meant to them.

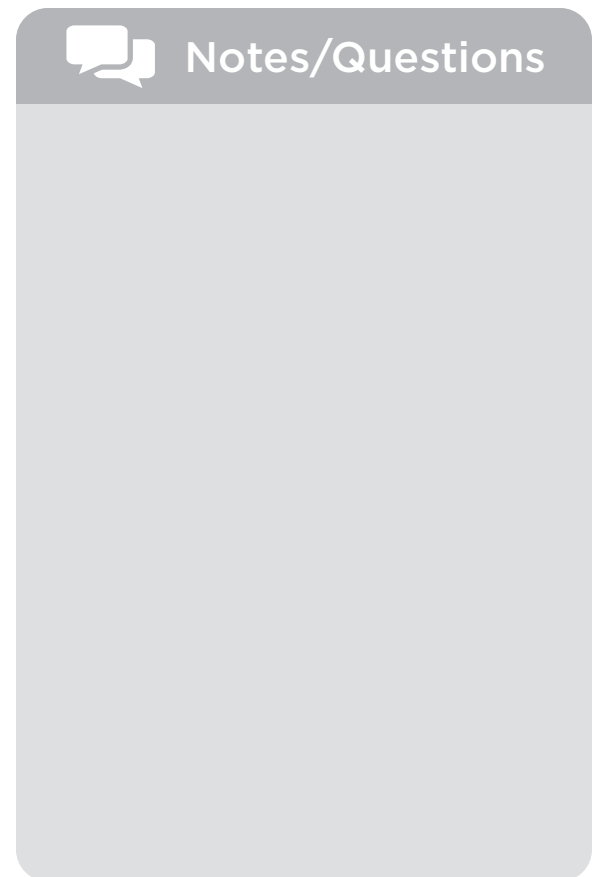
They did not view meditating as simply emptying their minds of thoughts, as some other religions do. To people in biblical times, meditating on Scripture meant reading it slowly or listening to someone read it out loud. As they read or listened, they would consider what God might be telling them through those words. They tried to appreciate every word and sentence being communicated—kind of like slowly eating and enjoying delicious food.

We can meditate on the Bible the same way today. It is important to read the words slowly and carefully and to read each passage many times. Reading the Bible this way can help us understand what the Holy Spirit wants to teach us.

As we read, we can pray that God will open our hearts and our minds so that we can understand what we are reading and apply it to our lives.

Read **Psalm 1:1–6**.

4. Think about the image of a tree drawing strength from water. What does it mean for us to draw strength from God's Word?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How can you create a habit of reading and meditating on God's Word regularly?



## Trusting God for Answers

The writing style used by people in biblical times is different from the writing styles that people use today. The writers of the Bible did not provide the same number of details that we are used to reading in books today. Because of this, it is easy to see why people have a lot of questions when they read the Bible.

For example, the story of creation in Genesis 1–2 might cause readers to ask many questions. *Did anything exist before God created the earth? Why did God put the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden if He didn't want anyone to eat its fruit? Why did God take one of the man's ribs to create the woman?*

Read **Genesis 3:1–24**.

6. What are some questions you have about this story?

Scripture does not always give us all the details we think it should, but every detail that *is* provided is important. For example, God told the serpent (Satan) that Adam and Eve's offspring\* (a son from a future generation) would crush his head. Christians today understand that God was talking about Jesus, who would come to earth to defeat Satan. But at the time, God's people were still waiting for this promise to come true.

The question of who this offspring would be can be found throughout the Bible. Many passages in the Bible point to someone who will come to lead God's people and save them. God's people continued asking, "Who is it?" until God finally provided an answer through Jesus.

Because the Bible was written this way, we will naturally have questions as we read it. But that just means we need to keep reading. Each new idea we learn helps us understand other parts of the Bible and see how it all fits together. If we still have questions, we pray to God for understanding, and we learn to trust God with the things we do not know.

It is important to trust God for the answers because we, as humans, don't know everything. If we try to come up with our own answers, we may start believing things that are not true about God or His Word. This is why we need to read Scripture carefully and thoughtfully, opening our hearts to learn the truth instead of thinking we have everything figured out. When we trust God, we will find that the Bible is an invitation from God to get to know Him and build a relationship with Him.

7. If you could ask God one question, what would that question be?

## Why We Read the Bible

There are two reasons why every Christian needs to read the Bible. First, we read the Bible so that we can grow in our relationship with God. As we read Scripture, we learn about God—who He is, what He has done, and what He wants for us and for the world. Second, we read the Bible to learn how God wants us to live. As we open our hearts to God's love, we allow Him to shape and mold us so that our lives honor Him.

Read **Hebrews 4:12–13**.

8. How does this passage describe God's Word?



Notes/Questions

If we are following God, His Spirit is alive within us. He knows everything about us, including all our thoughts and desires. God wants what is best for us, but without His help, it is impossible for us to know or obey His will.

9. Why do you think it's important to remember that God knows our thoughts and desires?

When we meditate on God's Word and pray to Him for understanding, He helps us see the world the way that He sees it. Then we can start to live in a way that shows how much we love Him.

In order to begin that process, we need to learn how to apply Scripture to our lives. We need to let the truths we read in the Bible change our thoughts and actions. Some changes may be easy. Others will require time and patience as we keep trying to live the way God wants us to live.

10. What is a truth from Scripture that you feel God is calling you to apply to your life today?

## A Method for Meditation

We know that God wants us to spend time in His Word, but it can be difficult to know the best way to do that. There are many different ways to practice meditating and listening to God while reading the Bible.

Some people read each passage multiple times in a row. Some people rewrite passages in their own words to help them understand the meaning. Another great method for meditation is following these four steps: **Scripture, Observation,\* Application, and Prayer.**

**Scripture:** Choose a passage and read it. Write down a verse or set of verses that stood out to you. If you have questions about what the passage means, read the sections that come directly before and after your chosen passage.

**Observation:** Write down any thoughts you had as you read the passage. What words or phrases stood out to you? What questions came to mind? Where does this passage fit in the larger story of the Bible or within the book of the Bible you are reading? What did you learn from the passage?

**Application:** Think about ways you can apply the Scripture to your life. What does the passage say about how you might need to change the way you are living? How has it encouraged you or helped you?

**Prayer:** Pray that God will use this Scripture to guide you. Ask Him to help you apply it to your life and share the truth with others. Praise Him for His direction in your life.

11. Practice this meditation method:

**Scripture:** Read Matthew 28.

**Observation:** Write down what you learned and any questions you have.

**Application:** How can you apply the things you learned to your life?

**Prayer:** Write a prayer to God based on this Scripture.

As you continue to spend time in the Bible, remember that it is a lifelong process. It might take some time to understand what God's Word means for you. Be patient with yourself as you meditate and study. Ask God to guide your understanding and show you His will for your life.

12. What is one thing you learned about God from this lesson or course that you did not know before? How did this change you?

## Action Step

Choose one of the following passages to meditate on: Matthew 11:25–30; Mark 8:1–13; Luke 8:40–56; John 6:16–24.

**Scripture:**

**Observation:**

**Application:**

**Prayer:**

## Glossary of Terms

**Each lesson contains Bible names, terms, and ideas that may be new to you. We will do our best to provide definitions that are easy to understand. You will see an asterisk (\*) the first time each term appears in the lesson.**

**Meditate** — To focus the mind on something, such as the words in the Bible.

**Offspring** — A person's child or a child born later in the same family line.

**Observation** — The act of carefully watching or listening to someone or something in order to get information.

Images and ideas within this course have been excerpted from BibleProject's video miniseries "How to Read the Bible." The "How to Read the Bible" miniseries is copyright © 2017, 2020 by BibleProject and is available for viewing at [www.bibleproject.com](http://www.bibleproject.com). All BibleProject videos and resources are provided for free and any derivative works are to be provided for free to others. Crossroads is deeply thankful to BibleProject for generously granting Crossroads permission to use their materials for this course.

Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version®, Nlrv® Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com). The "Nlrv" and "New International Reader's Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

v.0624

International Office: **Crossroads | PO Box 900 | Grand Rapids, MI 49509-0900**

Use this space for **prayer requests, questions for the mentor who will review this lesson, or comments.**  
You can also use this space to **write a poem or draw.**

**If your address has changed, please mark this box and write your *new* address below.**

---

FIRST NAME

LAST NAME

ID#

---

INSTITUTION

HOUSING UNIT

---

STREET ADDRESS / PO BOX

---

CITY

STATE

ZIP