



# ENGAGE

A 21-Day Guide  
to Begin Your Daily  
Time with God





## **ENGAGE: A 21-Day Guide to Begin Your Daily Time with God**

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CSR7419



**SADDLEBACK CHURCH**

Published by Saddleback Church  
1 Saddleback Parkway  
Lake Forest, CA 92630  
[www.saddleback.com](http://www.saddleback.com)

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## ENGAGE: A 21-Day Guide to Begin Your Daily Time with God

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The one who looks steadily at God's perfect law . . . and makes that his habit—not listening and then forgetting, but actively putting it into practice—will be happy in all that he does.

**JAMES 1:25 JB**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A NOTE FROM RICK WARREN.....	6
15 MINUTES WITH GOD: A SCHEDULED PLAN TO GET YOU STARTED .....	8
3 QUESTIONS: BRING EACH DAY'S READING ALIVE .....	9

### WEEK

---

# 1

<b>BEGINNING YOUR NEW, LIFE-CHANGING HABIT .....</b>	<b>10</b>
DAY 1 James 1:1–8 .....	16
DAY 2 James 1:9–12 .....	18
DAY 3 James 1:13–18 .....	20
DAY 4 James 1:19–21 .....	22
DAY 5 James 1:22–27 .....	24
DAY 6 James 2:1–4 .....	26
DAY 7 James 2:5–13 .....	28

### WEEK

---

# 2

<b>BUILDING ON YOUR HABIT .....</b>	<b>30</b>
DAY 8 James 2:14–17 .....	34
DAY 9 James 2:18–26 .....	36
DAY 10 James 3:1–5 .....	38
DAY 11 James 3:5b–12 .....	40
DAY 12 James 3:13–18 .....	42
DAY 13 James 4:1–3 .....	44
DAY 14 James 4:4–10 .....	46



# WEEK

3

<b>STRENGTHENING YOUR HABIT</b> .....		<b>48</b>
DAY 15	James 4:11-12 .....	52
DAY 16	James 4:13-17 .....	54
DAY 17	James 5:1-6 .....	56
DAY 18	James 5:7-9 .....	58
DAY 19	James 5:10-12 .....	60
DAY 20	James 5:13-18 .....	62
DAY 21	James 5:19-20 .....	64

# WEEK

4	<b>CONGRATULATIONS!</b> .....	<b>67</b>
	What's Next? .....	68
	<b>APPENDIX</b> .....	<b>67</b>



“If you abide in  
My word, then you are  
truly disciples of Mine.”

**JOHN 8:31** NASB77

## A NOTE FROM RICK WARREN

Welcome to *ENGAGE: A 21-Day Guide to Begin Your Daily Time with God*. No other habit can do more to transform your life and make you more like Jesus than to study and act upon God’s Word. To be a healthy disciple of Jesus, feeding on God’s Word must be your first priority. Jesus called it “abiding.” He said, “*If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine*” (John 8:31 NASB77).

By the end of our twenty-one days together, the goal is to help you:

- Love the Word of God like you’ve never loved it before.
- Learn the Word of God like you’ve never learned it before.
- Live the Word of God like you’ve never lived it before.

God’s Word is not meant just to inform you, but to transform you. God never meant for Bible study to simply increase our knowledge. Receiving, reading, researching, remembering, and reflecting on the Bible is useless if we fail to put God’s Word into practice. The apostle James says if we want our lives to be blessed by God we must become “*doers of the word*” (James 1:22 KJV).

Jesus says both knowing and applying the Word creates the foundation for our lives: *“Everyone who hears these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock”* (Matthew 7:24). In order to become Christlike, we must become living translations of God’s Word.

God’s Word is unlike any other book. It is alive. When God speaks, your life will be transformed. But that can only happen by making the Bible the authoritative standard for your life: the compass you rely on for direction, the counsel you listen to for making wise decisions, and the benchmark you use for evaluating everything. The Bible must always have the first and last word in your life.

My hope is that the next twenty-one days will become the most important days of your life as you develop to the habit of a daily time with God.

*Rick Warren*



# 15

## MINUTES WITH GOD

### A SCHEDULED PLAN TO GET YOU STARTED

**1. RELAX** (1 minute)

Slow down and be still. Find a quiet place where you can prepare your heart. Take a few deep breaths and wait on God.

**2. READ** (4 minutes)

In these next twenty-one days, you will be reading the Book of James.

**3. REFLECT** (4 minutes)

Use the questions on the next page to help you meditate on each day's Scripture passage.

**4. RECORD** (2 minutes)

Write out a daily application statement that is personal, practical, possible, and provable.

**5. REQUEST** (4 minutes)

Conclude your daily time with God by talking to him about what he has shown you and making your requests to him in prayer.

# 3

## QUESTIONS

### BRING EACH DAY'S READING ALIVE



#### **WHAT DID YOU SEE?**

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



#### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



#### **WHAT WILL YOU DO?**

How can this change who you are and how you act?  
What can you do to live this out today/tomorrow?



---

WEEK

1

But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

**JAMES 1:25**





## WEEK ONE

---

# BEGINNING YOUR NEW, LIFE-CHANGING HABIT



## WEEK ONE

### BEGINNING YOUR NEW, LIFE-CHANGING HABIT

If you are reading this, then you have already taken one of the most important steps in your spiritual growth. In fact, multiple independent studies show that the single most transformative practice you can cultivate in the Christian life is the habit of daily Bible reading. Nothing else comes close to the growth that results when you interact with God's Word every day.

Think about it. There are thousands of voices that are speaking into us every single day telling us who we are, who we are supposed to be, what we are supposed to like and dislike, how we are supposed to act, dress, and behave. How important is it to let God—the one who made us and truly loves us—speak into our lives at least once a day? The goal of this guide is to help you do just that.

The most important step in building this habit? Starting! And here you are. Check that box as already done!

#### How Do I Build This Habit?

The first rule of habit-building is not just to set a goal, but to build a system to accomplish that goal. "I want to read the Bible more." That's the goal part. Think of New Year's resolutions: we want to lose weight, pray more, be better with money, love people better, etc. These goals push us to try, but what often happens by the second week of January? Our resolutions come crashing to the ground.

Take some time right now and answer the following four questions:


1. What time of the day will you open to each day's reading? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Where will you be when you open to each day's reading? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long will you spend? (Set a realistic goal. Don't feel bad starting with just 5 minutes!) \_\_\_\_\_
4. How will you track your progress? \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to cultivate this habit of daily Bible reading, start by paying attention to your system. In fact, let's build a system.

### Write Your "Statement of Commitment"

Write out a statement of commitment, based on your answers above and sign it. Recent studies found that 91% of people who wrote down their intended habit actually followed through. Feel free to model the example below and write your own statement of commitment in the box below.

*"I will open this booklet each day when I'm in my car before driving to work. I will spend 15 minutes per day. I will dog-ear each page I complete as a sign of my progress."*



Let perseverance finish its work  
so that you may be mature and  
complete, not lacking anything.

**JAMES 1:4**

## THE BOOK OF JAMES

To help you begin your journey into the Bible, we will be reading through the Book of James, located towards the end of the New Testament. So, what is this book about?

### Let's Set the Scene

This book is actually a letter written by a man named James, who was the half-brother of Jesus; they shared the same mother. Though Scripture hints at some possible tension James had with Jesus during his ministry (imagine the difficulties of having God-in-flesh as a brother), James grew into a wise and strong leader. In fact, James became the leader of a community of Jesus-followers in Jerusalem, the very first church. He was known for his knowledge of the Scriptures, his wise discernment, and his leadership even through tough times. Most scholars believe James wrote this letter within twenty years of Jesus' resurrection.

James held firm to his devotion to Jesus, even when his community fell on tough times. As a result of a terrible famine the city of Jerusalem experienced at the time, the church faced rampant poverty along with growing tension with the occupying Roman army and Jewish leaders that resulted in violent persecution of these early Christians. Yet, through all of this, James persisted in leading these followers of Jesus with consistency, humility, and strength.



Out of this turmoil, James wrote this letter. Unlike other letters you may read in the Bible (like Paul's letters to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, etc.), this letter is to all of Jesus' followers, who are scattered all throughout the known world.

This letter is a collection of teachings about how to live best as a Jesus follower—basically, how to be wise. Each teaching ties back to the Old Testament wisdom books like Proverbs and Job, but also retells and gives commentary to Jesus' most famous "Sermon on the Mount." Usually, the teaching from James ends with a punchy one-liner to help you remember.

## **Why It's Important to You**

So, what does this letter written thousands of years ago to ancient people have to do with you and your life? James wrote this letter to people that faced ongoing challenges in their life: Some had problems with holding their tongue; others tended to play favorites; some were divided in what they lived for; others pretended to be more religious than they actually were. Sound like a group of people you can empathize with?

Of course! This is such a great place to start your Bible reading because of its power to transform your daily life. In this letter, James is not primarily concerned with addressing the particular issues of his time, but to get into the personal lives of all of us who call ourselves "Christians." By getting personal, you'll see that James' words and challenges will have no problem applying to your life now. Be careful, it may sting a little! But like Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:32)."



DAY

1

*James 1:1–8*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 1:1–8

### Faith Produces Perseverance

<sup>1</sup>James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

<sup>2</sup>Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup>because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. <sup>4</sup>Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. <sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. <sup>6</sup>But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup>Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

How can this change who you are and how you act?  
What can you do to live this out today?

**REQUEST:** Talk with God about what you just read and thought through. Ask for his help and direction to live it out. Remember to involve him in this. He wants to hear from you!



DAY

# 2

*James 1:9–12*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 1:9–12

## True Perseverance

<sup>9</sup>Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position. <sup>10</sup>But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. <sup>11</sup>For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business. <sup>12</sup>Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

How can this change who you are and how you act?  
What can you do to live this out today?

**REQUEST:** Talk with God about what you just read and thought through. Ask for his help and direction to live it out. Remember to involve him in this. He wants to hear from you!



DAY

3

*James 1:13–18*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 1:13–18

### **Our Desires versus God's Gifts**

<sup>13</sup>When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup>but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. <sup>15</sup>Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. <sup>16</sup>Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. <sup>17</sup>Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. <sup>18</sup>He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

How can this change who you are and how you act?  
What can you do to live this out today?

**REQUEST:** Talk with God about what you just read and thought through. Ask for his help and direction to live it out. Remember to involve him in this. He wants to hear from you!



DAY

4

*James 1:19–21*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 1:19–21

### Living as Listeners

<sup>19</sup>My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup>because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

<sup>21</sup>Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

How can this change who you are and how you act?  
What can you do to live this out today?

**REQUEST:** Talk with God about what you just read and thought through. Ask for his help and direction to live it out. Remember to involve him in this. He wants to hear from you!



DAY

5

*James 1:22–27*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 1:22–27

### Living as Hearers and Doers

<sup>22</sup>Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup>Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup>and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup>But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

<sup>26</sup>Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup>Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

How can this change who you are and how you act?  
What can you do to live this out today?

**REQUEST:** Talk with God about what you just read and thought through. Ask for his help and direction to live it out. Remember to involve him in this. He wants to hear from you!



DAY

6

*James 2:1–4*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 2:1–4

### **Favoritism and Discrimination**

<sup>1</sup>My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. <sup>2</sup>Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. <sup>3</sup>If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” <sup>4</sup>have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

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DAY

7

*James 2:5–13*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 2:5–13

### **Favoritism and Discrimination** (continued)

<sup>5</sup>Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? <sup>6</sup>But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? <sup>7</sup>Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong? <sup>8</sup>If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. <sup>9</sup>But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. <sup>10</sup>For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. <sup>11</sup>For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. <sup>12</sup>Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, <sup>13</sup>because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

How can this change who you are and how you act?  
What can you do to live this out today?

**REQUEST:** Talk with God about what you just read and thought through. Ask for his help and direction to live it out. Remember to involve him in this. He wants to hear from you!

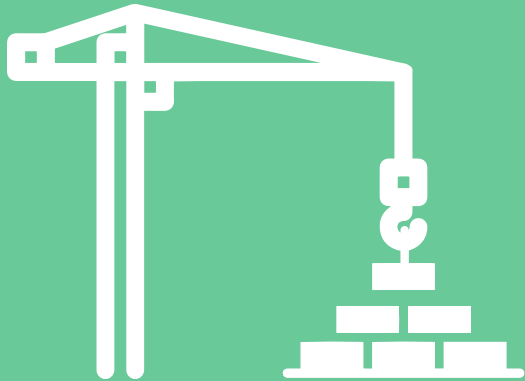


WEEK

2

In the same way,  
faith by itself,  
if it is not accompanied  
by action, is dead.

**PSALM 119:11**





## WEEK TWO

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### **BUILDING ON YOUR HABIT**



## WEEK TWO

### BUILDING ON YOUR HABIT

Congratulations, you made it through your first week! This is a big accomplishment worth celebrating. Believe it or not, you are already one-third of the way through your 21 days of habit building. This may have been the most Bible you've ever read on your own, and you could have lots of questions. That's a great thing! We learn best when we ask questions and discuss what we're learning with others. Talk to others in your small group, or ask any pastor after a weekend service.

Take a minute right now and think about the results of this new habit you are cultivating. What have you learned (about yourself, God, or others)? What challenges did you face? Was there any slight or major change you experienced as a result of your efforts? Reflecting on these things will help you stay consistent this week.

#### Keeping the Habit

Sticking with this for one week is an amazing start. As time continues, however, it can become easier and easier to miss a day or to drop this habit altogether. There is a lot of research about strengthening your habits that could help you build this important spiritual habit in the days ahead.

Try these tips to help enforce your new habit.

## 1. **Shape Your Environment**

Where are you spending your time with God? Is it quiet? Is it refreshing? If it isn't, it is far more likely for you to drop the habit. Make it comfortable and tie it to something pleasant like coffee, fresh air, or even chocolate!

## 2. **Link Your Habits**

Struggling with consistency? Take something you do every day already (brushing teeth, watching TV, driving, eating breakfast) and link that already built habit with your time with God. For instance, put this guide on top of your TV remote as a reminder to do this first. Place it under your toothbrush or in your car to read before each day's drive. By doing this, you link the strength of your current habit with this new one.

## 3. **Don't Miss Twice**

Remember to not get on a guilt trip if you miss a day here or there. At the same time, do your best to not miss two in a row, which could easily stop your efforts. Instead, if you miss a day, just pick back up where you left off!

## **Praying for God's Help**

God has given us his Holy Spirit to guide, empower, and equip us for the life he has for us. Remember that you are not on your own as you cultivate this habit. The God of the universe is celebrating alongside you as you put the effort in to hear from him every day!



DAY

# 8

*James 2:14–17*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 2:14–17

## Faith with Action

<sup>14</sup>What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? <sup>15</sup>Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup>If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup>In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

How can this change who you are and how you act?  
What can you do to live this out today?

**REQUEST:** Talk with God about what you just read and thought through. Ask for his help and direction to live it out. Remember to involve him in this. He wants to hear from you!



DAY

# 9

*James 2:18–26*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 2:18–26

## Faith as a Lifestyle

<sup>18</sup>But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. <sup>19</sup>You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. <sup>20</sup>You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? <sup>21</sup>Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup>You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. <sup>23</sup>And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. <sup>24</sup>You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup>In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? <sup>26</sup>As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



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What can you do to live this out today?

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DAY

# 10

*James 3:1–5*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 3:1–5

## The Power of Words

<sup>1</sup>Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

<sup>2</sup>We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check. <sup>3</sup>When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. <sup>4</sup>Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. <sup>5</sup>Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

How can this change who you are and how you act?  
What can you do to live this out today?

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DAY

11

*James 3:5–12*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 3:5b–12

### Controlling Our Mouths

Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. <sup>6</sup>The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, <sup>8</sup>but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup>Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. <sup>11</sup>Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? <sup>12</sup>My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

How can this change who you are and how you act?  
What can you do to live this out today?

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DAY

# 12

*James 3:13–18*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 3:13–18

## God's Wisdom versus World's Wisdom

<sup>13</sup>Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. <sup>15</sup>Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup>Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

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### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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DAY

# 13

*James 4:1–3*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 4:1–3

## The Cause of Conflict

<sup>1</sup>What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup>You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. <sup>3</sup>When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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DAY

# 14

## *James 4:4–10*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 4:4–10

### Conflict with God

<sup>4</sup>You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup>Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? <sup>6</sup>But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." <sup>7</sup>Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

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## WEEK

# 3

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

**JAMES 5:7-8**

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## WEEK THREE

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### STRENGTHENING YOUR HABIT



## WEEK THREE

### STRENGTHENING YOUR HABIT

What an accomplishment! You've now been spending daily time with God for two weeks straight and are almost finished with an entire book of the Bible! Whether you've missed a day here or there, remember that reading the Bible is a "get to" life opportunity instead of a "have to" religious rule. God knows we live best when our lives are shaped by his Word. This habit has been shown to be the single most transformative element in spiritual growth. Whether you have just started this journey with Jesus or you have been walking alongside him for a long time now, regular Bible reading and reflection helps growth at all stages. And of course it would—it's God's Word to us!

#### How to Strengthen this Habit

By now, you may be tempted to push it much harder than you have: quadruple the time, read twice as much Bible each day, or spend twice as much time in prayer. Be careful!

Remember, we want to focus on our systems instead of just the goal. If you begin to bite off too much, you could become discouraged and give up. Your brain is actually designed to find the easiest solution—to "hack" your plans. If it is too hard, your brain will work to find a shortcut. Instead, imagine taking very small steps forward.

#### Reflect on the Results

It's always good to see results for our investment in time. As the Bible talks about it, there should be fruit from our labor. We see a lower number on the scale after diet and exercise. We see a better grade on a test after studying. We see more money in our bank account after saving. This spurs us on to keep at our habits.

If you want to increase your time with God each day from, say, 5 minutes, **try adding just one minute a day** this next week.

On Monday, **do 6 minutes**. Tuesday, **7 minutes**. Wednesday, **8 minutes**. And so on.

By the end of the week, you'll be at almost **15 minutes!** Then stay there.

Sometimes, the spiritual realm can feel a bit more ambiguous. But it's not! Reflect on what Paul writes to Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:16–17 TLB

*The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true, and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is God's way of making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone.*

Take some time, right now, and write down a few results you have seen from your efforts so far. Look at the passage above and see if any of it has come alive in your life. Whatever results you have seen, write them down in the space below:



DAY

# 15

*James 4:11–12*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 4:11–12

## Conflict with People

<sup>11</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. <sup>12</sup> There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

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What can you do to live this out today?

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DAY

# 16

*James 4:13–17*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 4:13–17

## Warning to the Proud

<sup>13</sup>Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.”

<sup>14</sup>Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup>Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” <sup>16</sup>As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup>If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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DAY

17

*James 5:1–6*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 5:1–6

### Warning to the Well-Off

<sup>1</sup>Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. <sup>2</sup>Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. <sup>4</sup>Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. <sup>5</sup>You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence.

You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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DAY

# 18

*James 5:7–9*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 5:7–9

## Brave Patience

<sup>7</sup>Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. <sup>8</sup>You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. <sup>9</sup>Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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### WHAT WILL YOU DO?

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DAY

19

*James 5:10–12*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 5:10–12

**Brave Patience** (continued)

<sup>10</sup>Brothers and sisters, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

<sup>11</sup>As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. <sup>12</sup>Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does this impact you? What does it say about how you view life, God, yourself, or others?



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DAY

# 20

*James 5:13–18*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 5:13–18

## The Power of Prayer

<sup>13</sup>Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

<sup>17</sup>Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup>Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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DAY

# 21

*James 5:19–20*

**RELAX:** Slow down and be still.

**READ:** James 5:19–20

## Closing Instructions

<sup>19</sup>My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, <sup>20</sup>remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

**REFLECT then record:** Meditate on today's passage using the following questions as a guide, then write out your thoughts.



### WHAT DID YOU SEE?

What jumped out in your reading? What was surprising, confirming, comforting, or challenging?



### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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WEEK

4

Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

**JAMES 1:4**





## WEEK FOUR

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**CONGRATULATIONS!**



## WHAT'S NEXT?

You have now spent 21 days cultivating the habit of a daily time with God. Though this was a major commitment of time and discipline, the return on the investment will be exponential and eternal. God promises that his Word “will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace.” (Isaiah 55:11–12) Exploring God’s Word every day will bring you joy and peace. Perhaps you have already experienced this!

### Next Steps

- 1. Celebrate this accomplishment.** Treat yourself to something special or a fun experience to represent this step forward in your life. And remember to thank God for his help!
- 2. Plan your next step.** You have committed this time and worked hard to build this new habit, so DON'T LOSE IT! Take a moment right now to plan out what you will read in the Bible tomorrow during your daily time with God. Whatever you choose, just make sure you engage with the Bible tomorrow! The only wrong next step is not taking one.
- 3. Ask for help when you need it.** There is a whole world of resources out there to help you continue this habit. If you have any questions, have hit a wall, want to share about your progress, or need some help along this journey, reach out to your pastor or email [maturity@saddleback.com](mailto:maturity@saddleback.com).



## Plan Ahead

When I will have my daily time with God tomorrow: \_\_\_\_\_

Which book of the Bible will I read next: \_\_\_\_\_

## Additional Next Steps

**If you liked this experience,** we have available for you *ENRICH: A 40-Day Guide to Enhance Your Daily Time with God*, a tool very similar to this booklet. This guide will walk you through the Book of Philippians, the Gospel of Mark, and Psalm 1. It will even teach you some great, helpful tools for taking your daily time with God deeper. Visit [saddleback.com/ENRICH](http://saddleback.com/ENRICH) to download a copy.



**If you like reading a printed Bible,** open to the Book of Matthew and begin reading. Use the methods taught in this booklet and take the reading at a pace that allows you to focus daily on what God would teach you each day.

**If you are a podcast listener,** help supplement your daily Bible reading with Pastor Tom Holladay's *DriveTime Devotions*, a 10-minute reflection on Scripture. Visit [drivetimedevotions.com](http://drivetimedevotions.com) or search "DriveTime Devotions" on your favorite podcasting app.

**If you like reading the Bible on your phone or device,** the *YouVersion* Bible app has some great reading plans that will give you a specific set of verses to read each day. You can set reminders, track your progress, and even team up with friends to keep you on track!

**If you want to learn more great ways to study the Bible,** read Rick Warren's *Bible Study Methods*, available at [PastorRick.com](http://PastorRick.com).



Visit [saddleback.com/grow](http://saddleback.com/grow) for additional resources and help with next steps.



## KEYS TO A POWERFUL PRAYER LIFE

Here is a simple, seven-step method you can use to add power to your prayer life. It's based on The Lord's Prayer. If you follow these steps for forty days, your prayer life will be radically improved.

Matthew 6:9

*"This, then, is **how** you should pray . . ."*

### Praise: Begin By Honoring God

Matthew 6:9b NKJV

*"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name."*

### Two Ways to Praise God

- **ADORATION** — Praising God for who he is.

As you read your Bible, make a list of God's character qualities that you discover and then review them when you pray. For example, he is loving (John 3:16), compassionate (Psalm 103:13), merciful (Luke 6:36), forgiving (1 John 1:9), committed to us (Isaiah 49:15). What other characteristics can you think of?

God's character is the basis for our boldness in making requests in prayer. We ask with faith when we ask according to God's character. God answers the prayers that acknowledge who he is!

Hebrews 4:16 NLT

*So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*



- **THANKSGIVING** — Praising God for what he has done.

Psalm 100:4 NKJV

**Enter** into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.  
Be thankful to Him, and **bless His name**.

Make a list of all that you are thankful for today and review it when you pray:

**Now You Pray:** Begin by offering praise to God for who he is and what he has done in your life. You might pray something like this to get started:

*Heavenly Father,*

*I worship you today. You are my God, my King, my Savior and Lord. Thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your grace and compassion.*

Now begin to thank him for specific things that come to mind. How has he blessed you? How has he provided for you? How has he protected you? Don't think about the prayers he hasn't answered yet. Thank him for the prayers he has already answered. Thank him for what you already have.



## Purpose: Commit to Do God's Will

Matthew 6:10 NKJV

*"Your kingdom come. **Your will be done** on earth as it is in heaven."*

Romans 12:1b GNT

*Offer yourselves as a **living sacrifice** to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer.*

**Now You Pray:** Pray a short prayer surrendering your will to God's will. Pray something like this:

*Lord,*

*I believe you know what's best for me. So I want to do things your way. Please bring your rulership and wisdom into every area of my life today . . .*



## Provision: Ask God to Provide Your Daily Needs

Matthew 6:11 NKJV

*“Give us this day our **daily** bread.”*

What needs can you pray about? All of them! There is nothing too big—or too small—for God’s attention. He cares about every detail of your life.

James 4:2b

*You do not have, because you do not ask God.*

Matthew 6:32–33 NLT

*“Your heavenly Father already knows **all your needs**. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.”*

**Now You Pray:** Make a list of your specific needs today and tell the Lord about them.



## Pardon: Ask God to Forgive Your Sins

Matthew 6:12 NKJV

***“Forgive us our debts . . .”***

Don’t be afraid to tell the Lord about your sins. He already knows them. He just wants you to admit them to him and to yourself. He promises to forgive you when you ask him to.

1 John 1:9

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Psalms 32:5 NLT

*Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.” And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.*

**Now You Pray:** Take a minute to talk to God about any unconfessed sin in your life. If you can’t think of anything, ask him to show you if there is something you need to confess.



## People: Pray for Other People

Matthew 6:12b NKJV

*“... as we forgive our debtors.”*

1 Timothy 2:1b TLB

***Pray much for others;*** *plead for God’s mercy upon them; give thanks for all he is going to do for them.*

The Bible commands us to pray for other people—even those who have harmed us.

**Now You Pray:** Make a list of people you need to pray for. They can be family, friends, co-workers, and of course, people you know who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Pray as the Lord leads you. At the very least, mention their names in prayer to God and ask for his blessing on their lives. If your list becomes too long, spread them over different days of the week.

Family, friends, co-workers, etc. Be sure to pray for those who do not know Jesus yet.



## Protection: Ask for spiritual protection

Matthew 6:13 KJV

*“And lead us not into temptation, **but deliver** us from evil.”*

Christians face a spiritual battle every day. Satan wants to defeat us through temptation and fear. By praying for protection, you will have the confidence to face every situation during the day.

1 John 4:4b GNT

*The Spirit who is in you is more powerful than the spirit in those who belong to the world.*

**Now You Pray:** Ask the Lord to keep you safe from danger or harm. Ask him to give you inner strength to flee from temptation.



## **Praise: Finish the Way You Started with Worship**

Matthew 6:13b NKJV

*“For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”*

**Now You Pray:** Thank God for hearing your prayer. Praise him in advance for what he is going to do.



## KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT READING THE BIBLE

### What's Unique About the Bible?

The Bible is a living book that continues to speak and write itself on the hearts of God's redeemed people. It is God's divine, progressive, written revelation of himself to mankind.

The central theme of the Bible is God's redemption of humanity. Its central figure is Jesus Christ. Its central message is the supremacy of a loving God. The Bible is inerrant, infallible, and perfectly trustworthy. It is the ultimate authority and standard for Christian living.

The Bible is one book with one author—the Holy Spirit. Yet it is also a collection of sixty-six books, written over a period of 1,500 years by over forty different writers.

There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament. Neither testament can be fully understood apart from the other, as each one sheds light on the other. The New Testament is hidden in the Old; the Old Testament is revealed in the New.

### Why Do I Need to Read the Bible?

The Bible is the starting place of your friendship with God. Reading the Bible is reading God's mind. It teaches us what he says and how he thinks. It reveals not just what he did, but how he does things. When we read his words, we get to know his character—not just becoming familiar with his book, but becoming friends with the Author himself. The more we get to know him, the more we become like him in thought, word, action, and character.



Just as your body cannot survive without food, your soul cannot survive without the Bible. Pastor Rick Warren refers to the Bible as “soul food.” The Bible describes itself as the water, milk, bread, meat, and honey of the spiritual life. It is spiritual food that causes spiritual health, resulting in spiritual growth. Without it, you will wither. Jesus said, *“Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God”* (Matthew 4:4).

The Word of God is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path (Psalm 119:105), and a mirror to our soul (James 1:23). The Bible is not so much a map as it is a compass. It keeps us on the proper heading. Just as the star led the wise men to Jesus, the Bible keeps us pointed in the right direction and lights our path toward Christlikeness.



## GUIDELINES FOR REWARDING READING

1. **DON'T OBSESS ABOUT FINDING SOMETHING NEW.** In fact, if you think you have seen something in the Bible that no one else has ever seen, then it's probably wrong. That's why it is so important for us to share our insights with other trusted men and women of God who can help us clarify our thinking. At the same time, try to read with fresh eyes and ears. Invite the Lord to speak to you in a new way.
2. **READ SLOWLY.** This is an exploration, not a race.
3. **READ PRAYERFULLY.** Talk to God while you're reading. Ask him for wisdom and understanding.
4. **READ OPENLY.** Read the Bible with an open heart and open ears. Approach the text with a predisposition to obey what God prompts you to do.
5. **DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE THINGS YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.** Move on to the things you do understand. Pray for God's wisdom. Ask him to open your eyes and ears and heart, and then keep reading slowly until something catches your attention. You may stop at something different each time.
6. **READ AT A LEISURELY PACE ALL THE WAY THROUGH THE ASSIGNED PASSAGE.** Then as time allows, go back to the beginning of the passage and read it again, slower this time. Pay attention to word choices, time elements, and verb tenses. Use a pen to underline key words that have special meaning to you. Then read the passage a third time, paying extra attention to the parts you underlined.



7. **WHEN SOMETHING CATCHES YOUR ATTENTION—A PARAGRAPH, VERSE, PHRASE, OR EVEN A SINGLE WORD—STOP AND THINK ABOUT IT.** Try to find the essence of the message. Put it into your own words. What do you think God is trying to tell you in this place? What are you seeing? What are you hearing? What are your thoughts and feelings? How are you responding?
8. **KEEP A JOURNAL.** Use the “My Conversation with God” format to help you record your thoughts. Be sure to date your entries. Then at a future date, you can look back at what you wrote and remember what God said to you at that time in your life.



## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN NOTHING HAPPENS?

Before I answer that question, let me say this: the Bible is a spiritual book, and reading it is an act of faith. Just because you don't think or feel that you are getting anything out of your reading doesn't mean you aren't. What's important is that you're feeding on the Word of God—your daily bread. It is nourishing your soul in ways you are not aware of.

There are several reasons why it might seem like nothing is happening when you read:

- Some passages are harder than others.
- You could be distracted.
- You could be tired.
- There could be sin in your life.
- You could be reading a passage that is not particularly interesting to you at the time.
- God might want you to go back to something you were reading the previous day so he can finish his thought.
- Perhaps he is speaking to you, but you just aren't aware of it.

What's most important is that you come to the Bible in faith. Everything you do for God must be done in faith. Our thoughts and feelings can play tricks on us. Therefore, we must trust the Holy Spirit to speak through the Word of God, regardless of how we feel about our time spent in the Bible.

God does not always work on a conscious level with us. Many times, he is working deep within our hearts, in areas and in ways that we do not recognize. Sometimes something you read will come back to your memory later that day—or even days later—as the Holy Spirit brings the Word to bear in a situation you face. The main thing to remember



is to be faithful. Come to the Word each day with an expectation that God will speak to you.

If you don't sense him stopping you in the text, then just keep reading faithfully . . . slowly . . . until he stops you. It might not happen today, but it will happen eventually. Regardless, you will be feasting on the Word of God, "*which is at work in you who believe*" (1 Thessalonians 2:13b).

It's important not to try to control the conversation. Just surrender to the Word of God. Come with an open heart, open hands, open eyes, open ears, and an open mind.



## WHICH BIBLE IS RIGHT FOR ME?

With the great variety of Bibles to choose from, how can you know which Bible is right for you? What is the difference between the NIV, the NLT, and the NKJV, and what do those initials stand for, anyway? Which one is the most accurate? Are they re-writing the Bible? Isn't there something wrong with that?

These are questions people commonly ask when choosing a Bible. Hopefully, this section will answer those questions and help you decide which Bible is right for you.

First, we'll talk about translations: what are their differences? Are some better than others? Then we'll look at three categories of Bibles: straight text, Study Bibles, and Application Bibles.

So if you're wondering which Bible is right for you, read on, and set your mind at ease.

### The Gift of Translations

Bible translations fall into three basic categories: Word-for-Word, Thought-for-Thought, and Paraphrase. Their styles can vary from the highly formal and poetic King James language to the street-level informality of the Message paraphrase. Even so, almost every translation is put together by large teams of biblical scholars who work from the oldest and best known texts available.

### Word-for-Word

Word-for-word translations exchange one word in the original language for its English equivalent while strictly following the original mechanics, form, and structure of each sentence. The goal is to change as little as possible. The result is a translation that looks and feels very close to the original, but at times sounds different from



the way people talk or write today. Word-for-word Bibles are well suited for detailed study and more in-depth reading.

**KING JAMES VERSION (KJV):** This translation was first published in 1611 and has since become the best selling book in history. It's a very precise translation, but it's also very traditional, sounding more like Shakespeare than modern English. It's a translation of historical importance and traditional beauty, but is also quite challenging to read.

**NEW KING JAMES VERSION (NKJV):** This translation was made in 1982 to update the language and spelling of the King James so that words like “thee,” “thou,” and “ye” are no longer used. The detail and precision of the King James were preserved, but the style may still be challenging for some to read.

**NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE (NASB):** This is one of the most accurate translations for detailed study. Colleges and seminaries frequently recommend this translation for their students. It's fairly challenging in some places because it holds so tightly to original texts. While many people use it for regular reading, most use it more often for study.

## Thought-for-Thought

Thought-for-thought translations also work at the level of individual words, but preference is given to the basic thought or idea that the author is intending to communicate. The goal is to make it easier to read. Where a word-for-word translation can be choppy and challenging, the thought-for-thought translation slightly rephrases and better articulates the passage for readers. The result is an accurate translation that flows well, is easy to read, and sounds more modern and lively. These translations are the best choice for general reading and most studies. It is important to note that some thought-for-thought translations, like the New Living Translation, lean more towards communicating the general thought, while others like the New International Version stay closer to communicating the specific word.



**NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV):** The NIV is the best selling and most widely used Bible translation today. It's a good balanced translation because it's both precise like a word-for-word translation and easy to read like a thought-for-thought translation. For this reason, the NIV is popular for both general study and regular reading.

**NEW LIVING TRANSLATION (NLT):** The NLT allows for more creativity in translating from the original text than most other translations. Its modern language and style help to clarify the meaning of passages in a new way that's designed to catch the reader's attention.

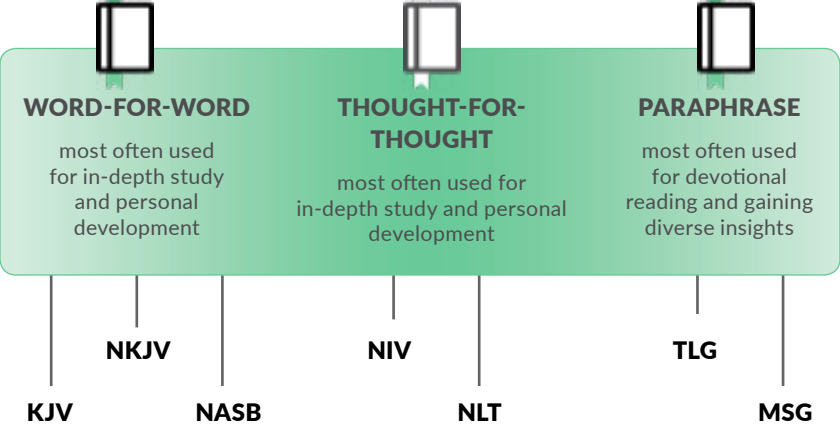
## Paraphrase

Paraphrased Bibles are a relatively new type of translation. The goal is to make the Bible easier to understand. The translator looks at the original text, translates it into English, but also rewrites it into his own words and style. In a paraphrase, precise words and immediate thoughts are not as important as communicating the general meaning of the passage. The result is a Bible that is easy to read because it uses simple, common language and the author does a lot of the interpretation for us. Paraphrases are best for seeing familiar passages in a new light, or learning how to share God's Word in your own words. A paraphrase makes a good second Bible, or can be especially helpful for new believers or people who struggle with understanding the Bible. However, it is not a good choice for in-depth study and it could be difficult to use in most small groups.

**THE LIVING BIBLE (TLB):** The Living Bible is Kenneth Taylor's interpretive paraphrase of the Bible. Taylor created this paraphrase as a help for those who wanted to read the Bible to children without having to stop and explain many things. In a 1979 interview published in Christianity Today he explained that the version began in the context of his efforts to explain the biblical text to his own children during family devotions.

**THE MESSAGE (MSG):** The Message paraphrase, written by biblical scholar Eugene Peterson, is one of the most current, creative, and understandable Bible paraphrases available. The writing style is enjoyable to read, easy to understand, and makes the most basic of biblical ideas accessible to everyone.

### BIBLE TRANSLATION COMPARISON





## WHICH BIBLE TRANSLATION IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

As the years go by, most people acquire a couple of different Bibles and use them for different purposes. You might have one you travel with, or one you use at small group, or one at your desk that you highlight, underline, and write in. But ultimately, the best Bible for you or a friend is going to be whichever translation will be read on a regular basis and whatever type has information that will be helpful and encouraging. Think about where and how the Bible is going to be read most. Look through a few different versions and compare a couple of passages. In the end, don't think about "Which Bible *should* I get?" but ask yourself "Which Bible do I really want to read?"

Here's a quick comparison of styles to choose from. The text is Matthew 5:13–16.

### King James Version (KJV)

*<sup>13</sup>"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. <sup>14</sup>Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. <sup>15</sup>Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. <sup>16</sup>Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*



### New King James Version (NKJV)

<sup>13</sup>“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup>Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

### New American Standard Bible (NASB)

<sup>13</sup>“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; <sup>15</sup>nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup>Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”



### New International Version (NIV)

<sup>13</sup>“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

### New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>13</sup>“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”



## The Message (MSG)

<sup>13</sup>“Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You’ve lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage. <sup>14-16</sup>Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.”

## The Living Bible (TLB)

<sup>13</sup>“You are the world’s seasoning, to make it tolerable. If you lose your flavor, what will happen to the world? And you yourselves will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. <sup>14</sup>You are the world’s light—a city on a hill, glowing in the night for all to see. <sup>15-16</sup>Don’t hide your light! Let it shine for all; let your good deeds glow for all to see, so that they will praise your heavenly Father.



## RESOURCES FOR IN-DEPTH STUDY

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

The searchable online Bible—Bible Gateway is a tool for quickly reading and researching scripture online, all in the language or translation of your choice!



### **The Way of a Worshiper, by Buddy Owens**

A book about looking for God. The pursuit of God is the chase of a lifetime—in fact it's been going on since the day you were born. The question is, have you been the hunter or the prey? God is looking for worshipers. His invitation to friendship is open and genuine.

Will you take him up on his offer? Will you give yourself to him in worship? Come walk *The Way of a Worshiper*, and discover the secret to friendship with God.

## SADDLEBACK RETREAT CENTER

The Retreat Ministry at Rancho Capistrano is a beautiful, 170-acre oasis where you can go to pursue spiritual growth, rest, and renewal through affordable retreat programs.

Day and overnight retreats, workshops, and special events are available for individuals and groups with all-inclusive accommodations to create an enriched experience that has a lasting impact. Visit [saddleback.com/retreats](https://saddleback.com/retreats) for upcoming retreats.







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