

***THE BASIC THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT READING AND
STUDYING THE BIBLE***

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The Book called the Bible

In your hand you have a New Testament or a complete Bible. The New Testament covers the life of Jesus and the story of the early church. The Bible includes the New Testament but starts with the Old Testament, which is the foundation of history about the Jewish people and the Bible that Jesus read and studied. The Bible, sometimes also called Scripture, is the Word of God.

The Bible is a remarkable piece of literature with many authors, but only one message

The Bible was written over a time of 1,500 years by at least 40 different authors. God used their different skills, gifts and communication styles to give us the Bible. While they addressed their subjects from different points of view and through various literary styles, their message remains the same in a remarkable way: God is alive and he cares for us so much that he provided a Redeemer in order for us to have fellowship with God forever.

Without apology, and in a language easy to be understood, the Scripture states simple truth about many subjects. For centuries the wisest scholars have marveled at the Bible's ability to say with clarity so much in so few words.

We could actually call it the **Handbook for Life**. Many people call themselves Christians but seldom open the Bible. The failure to follow its wonderful instruction is often not because people cannot read but because they choose not to read. Some think the Bible is confusing and hard to understand, and therefore they do not read it.

The Bible is God's way of communicating with us. We are his creation and he is the supreme God. He has a plan for us. What better way could be found for God to communicate his plan and his will than through a book?

I love ice cream. Three scoops are about all I can handle. If I eat twenty-five scoops I will be extremely sick.

But it is completely opposite with the Bible. The more we eat the hungrier we get. The less we eat the less hungry we get.

The Bible has tremendous authority

God is the supreme God. He has always existed. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Therefore God has authority. He speaks through his word, which is the ultimate authority of God. That authority is transforming and changes us to have a powerful

relationship with the living God through his son Jesus Christ. It is through the authority of the Word of God that we meet God and Jesus Christ as our Savior. Therefore it is important that we recognize that this book speaks with authority.

The Bible is unique and complete

There were no newspapers or radio broadcasts when God created the world. No one was watching God when he formed the earth, the heavens and the stars. How did the writers know these things? There is only one answer: This is God's book.

It teaches us about ourselves, God, and his salvation. The Bible is also the greatest book on morality and ethics. There are many other sacred books in the world. Each religion has one or more. But compared to the Scriptures, they don't deal with issues of the human heart as the Word of God does. When it comes to ethics, the Bible stands alone.

The Bible is a wide-ranging book. It contains history, sharing a rather accurate picture of people's characters. It includes poetry, sermons, drama, proverbs, prophecy and law. Most of all it reveals God's eagerness to bring men, women and children close to himself in a personal relationship.

The entire Bible is the Word of God. It is not a quick answer book we need for a happy marriage, a good job or meaningful work, a good harvest, or maintaining or losing weight. While the Bible deals with many topics, it is above all about who God is, what he thinks, and what he wants with our lives.

The Bible has teaching that is beyond any other writings

You would expect the teaching in a book coming from God to be different. The difference will be clear when reading and studying this book. Read the Sermon on the nary man, making these marvelous statements, it is God speaking to us. Or sympathize with Paul as he travels on his mission journeys in the book of Acts. Look over Paul's shoulder when he encourages the churches with letters from his prison cell. Or join John, in the book of Revelation, as he has visions of our final future and heaven's glory. These teachings are beyond any other writings.

The Bible is inspired and has power

We often refer to the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, which they are. God's words have incredible power.

One day in the early 1990's, I met one of the leaders in what was then the city of Leningrad in the Soviet Union. He told me, "I am an atheist. But the books you are giving the students in our schools have such an incredible power that after three months, I have already seen a behavioral change in them." *What book was that?* It was a portion of the Bible.

A Muslim student in Asia sat down with me some time ago and gently shared, "I am a Muslim. But through this book, I have found a love that is changing my life." *What book was that?* It was the Bible.

In Sweden, a young atheist woman who hated the God she did not believe existed, started reading a book a friend had given her in high school. As she read through the pages, she was confronted with the story of the man in the book and it changed her life. *What book was that?* It was the Bible.

There is incredible power in the Bible, the *Word of God*. The book of Hebrews expresses it like this:

For 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 (Hebrews 4:12).

Why is the Bible so special?

The average Bible, you may notice, usually has black covers, often has black ink, thin pages, and is heavy as a brick! But what makes it so special?

Art, music, and literature draw heavily from the imagery in the pages of this sacred book.

The legal system in some parts of the world originates from the Old Testament law and still has legal usage. In many courts a person swears to "tell the truth and nothing but the truth", holding one hand on a Bible.

For example, when the Queen of England was crowned in 1953, one of the bishops preceded her carrying a Bible. As the Queen made her coronation pledge, she placed her hand on that book.

But most of all, the Bible is special because it has the power to transform ordinary lives!

If you were stranded on a desert island and could only have one book with you, which book would you choose? You don't want a book to entertain you. You don't want a self-help book to improve your personality. More likely, you want a book that will show you how to get off the island, perhaps a book that tells you how to build boats!

Eventually our stay on this island leads to death unless we are rescued. We are stranded here, but there is a book that tells us how to get home to another world, and a future other than death. The Bible is that book.

The Bible tells us about God

Today people hunger for relevance and revelation, wanting to interact with some spiritual being. That is why we have so many religions in the world. People are searching for God.