

4. Read Scripture with its Major Covenants (or Promises) in Mind.

- **THE CREATION MANDATE:** Humanity is created in the image of God to live and thrive in rich relationship/partnership with God and each other, stewarding the rich resources God placed at their disposal for his glory, the benefit of others, and their joy.
- **GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM:** God promises to bless Abraham and to make his name great, his descendants will become a prosperous nation through whom all the people of the earth would be blessed.
- **GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL:** God promises to live in a special relationship with Israel through which he would mediate his grace and blessing to all people. God binds himself to Israel and Israel to himself through the Law. The Law embraced every aspect of Israel's life together and with God. It describes the conditions under which a sinful people could live in and enjoy the presence of a Holy God. Israel would flourish (or experience God's blessing) when they walked in humble obedience before God, and be severely judged (or cursed) when they rebelled against him.
- **GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID:** God would build a house and provide a lasting legacy for David. An heir of David would permanently occupy the throne. The people of God would flourish under a king after God's own heart.
- **NEW COVENANT:** God promises to renew and restore all of creation beginning with his people. He will give them a new heart and a new spirit. He will place his Spirit in them enabling them to do and be everything he has called them to do and be.

5. Read Scripture in big chunks.

6. Read Scripture in community.

7. Read Scripture with Pen and Paper in hand.

8. Be patient with the process. Scripture is always adequate for the moment, but takes a life time to master.

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Tim Mackie, of “The Bible Project” fame, previously called his podcast, “My Strange Bible.”

Tim knows, and most of us soon experience, that reading the Bible is a cross-cultural experience. The moment we open the pages of Scripture we cross a bridge into a strange time and place, full of strange foods and customs. The people of the Ancient Near East do not think the way we think, speak the way we speak, or live and work the way we live and work.” So at times, yes, especially when you are working your way through Leviticus or the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles, the Bible will indeed seem both strange and wonderful at the same time.

In spite of the strange customs, times and places, the Bible is an invitation to know the heart of God in the person of Jesus.

My favorite introduction to the Bible comes from Sally Lloyd Jones’ “Children’s Story Book Bible.” She writes.

God wrote, I love you—he wrote it in the sky, and on the earth, and under the sea. He wrote his message everywhere! Because God created everything in his world to reflect him like a mirror—to show us what he is like, to help us know him, to make our heart sing.

And God put it into words, too, and wrote it in a book called “the Bible.”

Now some people think the Bible is a book of rules, telling you what you should and shouldn’t do. The Bible certainly does have some rules in it. They show you how life works best. But the Bible isn’t mainly about you and what you should be doing. It is about God and what he has done.

Other people think the Bible is a book of heroes, showing you people you should copy. The Bible does have some heroes in it, but (as you will soon find out) most of the people in the Bible aren't heroes at all. They make some big mistakes (sometimes on purpose). They get afraid and run away. At times they are down right mean.

No, the Bible isn't a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a Story. It is an adventure story about a young hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It is a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne—everything—to rescue the one he loves. It is like the most wonderful of fairy tales that has come true in real life!

You see the best thing about this Story is that it is true.

There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling the one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them.

It takes the whole Bible to tell the story. And at the center of the Story there is a baby. Every story in the Bible whispers his name. He is like the missing piece in a puzzle—the piece that makes; all the other pieces fit together, and suddenly you can see a beautiful picture.

So our invitation this morning is to immerse yourself in the strange and wonderful world of the Bible. We want to invite you into the daily rhythm of reading and enjoying your Bible. We will offer you a few tips and resources to help you become a better reader.

1. Read Scripture Relational.

Our purpose in reading Scripture is to know the heart of God in order to be transformed into the image of His Son by His Spirit.

2. Take some early cues from Jesus.

a. The Old Testament Sets the Stage for the New Testament

MATTHEW 5:17-19 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

WHAT IS GOD LIKE? Apart from the Old Testament we will always have an impoverished view of God. God is not a philosophical construct but a Person who acts in history: the one who created Adam, who gave a promise to Noah, who called Abraham and introduced himself by name to Moses, who deigned to live in a wilderness tent in order to live close to his people. From Genesis 1 onward, God has wanted himself to be known, and the Old Testament is our most complete revelation of what God is like. —*Philip Yancey*

b. The Bible is About Love for God and Love for Neighbor

MATTHEW 22:35-40 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ⁱ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁱ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

c. Scripture is a Unified Story that Leads to Jesus.

LUKE 24:25-27 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

LUKE 24:44-49 He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

3. Read Scripture with the Larger Biblical Story (Plot Line or Narrative Arch) in Mind.

- **ACT 1:** God Establishes His Kingdom: *Creation*
- **ACT 2:** Rebellion in the Kingdom: *The Fall*
- **ACT 3:** The King Chooses Israel: *Restoration Initiated*
- **INTERLUDE:** A Kingdom Story Awaiting a Resolution
- **ACT 4:** The Coming of the King: *Restoration Accomplished*
- **ACT 5:** Spreading the News of the King: *The Mission of the Church*
- **ACT 6:** The Return of the King: *Restoration Completed*