

What Is the Best Way to Learn More About the Bible?

A lot of times we get bogged down when we approach the Bible because we do it in a totally different way than how we approach our classes or our hobbies. While this is probably well-intentioned and a valuable method, it might actually be making our reading of Scripture less accessible. For many of us, we do this because we don't properly understand the Bible. We limit it and think it's just an academic pursuit that is to be conquered, we think it is a good tool for self-improvement only to be read for personal spiritual guidance. But may I suggest that it can be both. But before I go any further... Let's take a quiz!

1. Learn How You Learn Best.

Visual Learners	Auditory Learners	Kinesthetic Learners	Social Learners	Solitary Learners
Work well with lists, pictures, diagrams	Work with sounds, spoken word, noises	Work with touching, doing, practical hands-on experiences	Prefer to learn/study in groups	Prefer to learn/study alone
"Show me." "Let's have a look at that."	"Tell me." "Let's talk it over."	"Let me try." "How do you feel?"	"Let's work together on this." "Help me understand this."	"I'd like some time to think it over." "I'll get back to you on that."
Prefer reading instructions	Prefer listening to instructions	Prefer to experiment without reading instructions first	Prefer to bounce ideas off of other people	Prefer to retreat to quiet areas and work
Train to associate things with pictures	Read aloud	Write thoughts and conclusions down		
Color code	Get an audio Bible	Exercise while reading		

2. Write in your Bible (and your other books!)

There are a few quotes I love from How to Mark a Book by Mortimer J. Adler

“There are three kinds of book owners. The first has all the standard sets and best-sellers—unread, untouched. (This deluded individual owns wood-pulp and ink, not books.) The second has a great many books—a few of them read through, most of them dipped into, but all of them as clean and shiny as the day they were bought. (This person would probably like to make books his own, but is restrained by a false respect for their physical appearance.) The third has a few books or many—every one of them dog-eared and dilapidated, shaken and loosened by continual use, marked and scribbled in from front to back. (This man owns books.)”

“Reading a book should be: a conversation between you and the author. Presumably he knows more about the subject than you do; naturally, you'll have the proper humility as you approach him. But don't let anybody tell you that a reader is supposed to be solely on the receiving end. Understanding is a two-way operation; learning doesn't consist in being an empty receptacle. The learner has to question himself and question the teacher. He even has to argue with the teacher, once he understands what the teacher is saying. And marking a book is literally an expression of your differences, or agreements of opinion, with the author.”

“You may say that this business of marking books is going to slow up your reading. It probably will. That's one of the reasons for doing it. Most of us have been taken in by the notion that speed of reading is a measure of our intelligence. There is no such thing as the right speed for intelligent reading. Some things should be read quickly and effortlessly, and some should be read slowly and even laboriously. The sign of intelligence in reading is the ability to read different things differently according to their worth. In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through you—how many you can make your own. A few friends are better than a thousand acquaintances. If this be your aim, as it should be, you will not be impatient if it takes more time and effort to read a great book than it does a newspaper.”

How Mortimer Adler Marks His Books (*See attachment*):

1. Underlining: of major points, of important or forceful statements.
2. Vertical lines at the margin: to emphasize a statement already underlined.
3. Star, asterisk, or other doo-dad at the margin: to be used sparingly, to emphasize the ten or twenty most important statements in the book. (You may want to fold the bottom corner of each page on which you use such marks. It won't hurt the sturdy paper on which most modern books are printed, and you will be able to take the book off the shelf at any time and, by opening it at the folded- corner page, re-

fresh your recollection of the book.)

4. Numbers in the margin: to indicate the sequence of points the author makes in developing a single argument.
5. Numbers of other pages in the margin: to indicate where else in the book the author made points relevant to the point marked; to tie up the ideas in a book, which, though they may be separated by many pages, belong together.
6. Circling of key words or phrases.
7. Writing in the margin, or at the top or bottom of the page, for the sake of: recording questions (and perhaps answers) which a passage raised in your mind; reducing a complicated discussion to a simple statement; recording the sequence of major points right through the books. I use the end-papers at the back of the book to make a personal index of the author's points in the order of their appearance. (How to Mark a Book - Mortimer J. Adler, 1941)

Talk with your books. Love them to death. Literally.

3. Get involved.

- **Be Discipled. Be, Be Discipled**
Find someone to disciple or mentor you. I know that some of you are already looking for this, but I encourage those of you who are not, to consider it.
- **Join a Bible-study group**
On your campus, there should be Bible study groups, either associated with a fellowship or a church. If your campus does not have one, I suggest you consider attending one of our TWIGS groups. We happen to have three groups around the state of Massachusetts and a major element of these groups is to get in to the word through the lens of the sermon that was preached the Sunday before. If you go to these Bible studies, you will learn more and more about the Bible.
- **Teach (or at least pretend)**
Next time you are in class look at your section TA. If she is worth her pay, she's really paying attention. She's taking notes and actively listening. You can see their minds trying to think of how they are going to interpret what the professor is saying for you. Approach the Bible this same way and you will attain a depth of understanding that you never realized was there. You will quickly understand how much you attain when you have respons-

ibility attached to your learning. Be a Bible TA and your knowledge of it will be deep. I'm talking 20, 000 leagues under the sea deep.

4. Read.

Oh yea you also need to actually read your Bible. Pastor Enoch went over this last time, but we can't stress it enough. No video series, no number of websites or conversations is going to replace actually reading your Bible. Period. So pick it up. Set yourself a plan and stick to it. If you miss a day, keep going. Try to get something out of your reading. I've heard it suggested that every time you read the Bible you should try to answer the question, "Today I learned that God is/has ____." If you need help, ask a friend, read another translation or read a commentary.

Let's practice by applying what we learned with Hebrews 2:14-15.

1. Read through the passage
2. Focus in on v14-15 and mark it as explained above, using the rest of the passage for context
3. Come to a conclusion about what v 14-15 is saying
4. Discuss with your table your conclusions
5. Compare with secondary literature provided below.

1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. 2 For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

5 Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. 6 It has been testified somewhere,

"What is man, that you are mindful of him,

or the son of man, that you care for him?

7 You made him for a little while lower than the angels;

you have crowned him with glory and honor,

8 putting everything in subjection under his feet."

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. 9 But we see him who for a little while was made

lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. 11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12 saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;

in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

13 And again,

“I will put my trust in him.”

And again,

“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrews 2:1-18 (ESV)

- **NIV Commentary**

14-15 The author now develops the thought of community of nature. Jesus shared “blood and flesh” (the proper order in Greek) with the children. He really came where they are, in order to nullify the power of the devil—who is described as the one “who holds the power of death.” This raises a problem because it is God alone who controls the issues of life and death (Job 2:6; Lk 12:5). But it was through Adam’s sin, brought about by the temptation of the devil, that death entered the world (Ge 2:17; 3:19; Ro 5:12). From this it is logical to assume that the devil exercises his power in the realm of death. But through his own death, Christ destroyed the power of the devil.

The author does not explain how Christ’s death does this but contents himself with the fact that it does. In doing so, he stresses the note of victory that we find throughout the NT (e.g., 1Co 15:54-57). The defeat of the devil means the setting free of those he had held sway over, i.e., those who had been gripped by fear of death. Fear is an inhibiting and enslaving thing; and when people are gripped by the ultimate fear—the fear of death—they are in cruel bondage. In the first century this was very real. The philosophers urged people to be calm in the face of death, and some of them managed to do so. But to most people this brought no relief. One of the many wonderful things about the Christian Gospel is that it delivers men and women from the fear of death (cf. Rev 1:18). They are saved with a sure hope of life eternal, a life whose best lies beyond the grave.

- **Deliverance From **the** Fear of Death, John Piper**

I want us to see the flow of thought in verses 14 and 15 about how Christ came to deliver you from the fear of death and make you free, by rendering the devil powerless in his destructive use of death. Then I want to compare that flow of thought with verse 17 to see **how** the death of Christ defeats the power of the devil in death. And then finally to close by asking: what about all the threats to our faith leading up to death, the suffering and the lost relationships.

Look with me at verses 14 and 15 and walk with me through the five steps that are here in your deliverance from bondage to the fear of death.

Step one (verse 14a): You are human. **"Since the children share in flesh and blood . . ."** The "children" is a reference back to verse 13 where it refers to the people that God calls to himself and gives to his Son, Jesus. So he says in verse 14 that these "children" share in flesh and blood, that is, they are simply human. They have a human nature. They are not angels or gods.

Step two (verse 14b): Christ became human. "Since then the children share in flesh and blood, **He Himself likewise also partook of the same.**" The Son of God, we saw back in Hebrews 1:2, did not come into being when Jesus was born. He existed before creation, indeed from eternity as the very image of God (1:3) and was himself God (1:8). But since the children whom he loved and wanted to save were human he took on the same human nature. So Jesus was actual God and actual man. It is a great mystery, but this is what God tells us about his Son.

Step three (verse 14c): Christ did this so that he could die. "Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, **that through death . . .**" In his di-

vine nature alone Christ's life was indestructible (Hebrews 7:16). He could not die. But a death was necessary to deal with guilt and the punishment of sin. So Christ became human precisely so that he could die. This is what love does. It embraces suffering and death for the life of others.

Step four (verse 14d): In dying, Christ rendered powerless the one who has the power of death, the devil. ". . . that through death **He might render powerless him who has the power of death, that is, the devil.**" In dying, Christ defeated, in some profound way, the power of the devil and took away his ability to destroy by death. How did Christ do that? That's what we will see when we look at verse 17. But for right now it just says that's what Christ willingly died to do. The apparent defeat of death was a knockout blow to Satan. How? Hold on, and we will see.

Step five (verse 15): The effect of defeating the devil in this way is that we are delivered from slavery to the fear of death. ". . . to render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 **and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.**" We are freed from the dream world of denial and escape and distraction. We can live now in the full stare of death and not be afraid or self-deluding.

That's the flow of thought in verses 14-15. Five steps: 1) you are human; 2) therefore Christ became human; 3) so that he might die for you; 4) to nullify the deadly power of the devil; 5) so that you might be freed from slavery to fear and live in freedom the rest of eternity.

Quiz #1

1.		16.	
2.		17.	
3.		18.	
4.		19.	
5.		20.	
6.		21.	
7.		22.	
8.		23.	
9.		24.	
10.		25.	
.			
11.		26.	
.			
12.		27.	
.			
13.		28.	
.			
14.		29.	
.			
15.		30.	
.			

Totals:

Answers from last time

- i. Matt. 1:22-23
 - a. Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (ESV)
 - b. Isa 8:8,10 and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.” ... Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us. (ESV)
- ii. Matt. 2:15
 - a. Hos 11:1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. (ESV)
- iii. Matt. 8:17
 - a. Isa 53:4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (ESV)
- iv. Matt. 12:17-21
 - a. Isa 42:1-3 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.
- v. Matt. 13:35
 - a. Ps 78:2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old (ESV)
- vi. Matt. 21:4-5
 - a. Zech 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
 - b. Isa 62:11 Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.”
- vii. John 18:9 This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: “Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.”
 - a. John 17:12 While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled
 - b. John 6:39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.
 - c. John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.
- viii. John 19:24
 - a. Psa 22:18 they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.
- ix. John 19:28-30
 - a. Psa. 69:21 - They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.