

FOOD FROM HEAVEN

Study 3

The Bible is the word of God, it's Him speaking to us. It is more than a book, it's a small library, containing 66 books. These were written over 1600 years ago by 40 different people. The contents of the bible has been preserved very carefully reaching our days with miraculous purity and fidelity. Not even books that have been written in the past last centuries stay so faithfully to their original extracts!

The reason why the written word in the Bible has been so looked after is because it has been written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and under the direct supervision of God.

The apostle Peter speaks by divine inspiration and says:

2 Peter 1:19-21 *“ And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophets own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

The Bible is the word that comes from God and is relevant even today. It is like food for our spirit. Such is this that in **Matthew 4:4** we find Jesus saying *“It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God”*

Which means that the word of God gives us _____.

There has not been and there will never be another book that offers comfort, wisdom and spiritual teaching as deep as the Bible does. In it we can hear God's voice, as He shows Himself throughout its pages. His own voice blesses us in many ways. Read the following verses and complete the sentences.

Romans 10:17 - Gives us _____

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - The Bible (The Scriptures) _____

Hebrews 4:12 - It penetrates to the deepest _____ bringing to light before God.

Psalms 119:105 - It acts as a _____ because it _____ our way. What does this mean?

Luke 11:28 - It makes us _____

Therefore, as with prayer, reading the Bible must be an important thing with our daily lives.

To make the most of reading the Bible, we are going to learn some concepts that will help us.

Structure or organisation of the Bible.

As we have said, the Bible is made of 66 books, divided in 2 groups:

1. The **Old Testament** that contains 39 books written before Jesus was born
2. The **New Testament** is made of the 27 books written after the coming of the Lord to the world.

The books of the Bible have some chronological order, although this is not a golden rule. Each book is divided into chapters and verses. This way of dividing them was introduced later on to make the finding of passages easier.

When we want to mention a passage in the Scriptures, we write it like this:

John 3:16

John is the book, 3 is the chapter and 16 is the verse. If we want to mention an interval of verses (from a verse to another verse), we split it with a dash like this:

John 3:10-16

which means that we will be reading from verse 10 to 16.

If instead of a dash, we use a comma like this:

John 3:10, 16, we will only be mentioning verses 10 and 16

Usually in the first pages of the Bible there is an index that indicates where each book starts. With practise, we will not need to refer to it as we will know where each books is by heart.

It is quite common to find a small letter in the verse in superscript, like this (^a) If you have a look at the bottom of the page, depending on the bible, you will find that there is an explanation or the meaning of a name, or one or more verses could be mentioned. These are verses that related to the passage we are reading. These references are useful when we are studying the Bible as they illustrate and widen our concept of what we are reading.

The Bible wasn't written in English originally and it had to be translated. Today we have different translations or versions available to us, most of which are good. What changes in the different translations is the language that is used.

Let's take a look at the same passage (**Matthew 4:4**) in different versions to see the differences and similarities.

NIV: *"Jesus answered, "it is written: man does not live on bread alone but by every word from the mouth of God"*

New King James: *"but he answered and said "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"*

The Message *"Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: "It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God's mouth"*

Tips for reading

“A text without a context is a pretext” as the old saying goes.

Let’s read **1 Corinthians 15:19** *“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”*

What does this verse mean? Doesn’t it look like a contradiction?

Now let’s read now from verses 12 to 20. Doesn’t this change the whole meaning of the passage?

We must always be aware of the context of the passage. It is good not to take any text out of its context. We must read what precedes it and what follows. We must look at what the author has been saying so far and what he is going to carry on saying.

We must also take into account what other passages of the Bible say, so as not to make the wrong conclusions too quickly.

Here are a few questions we could ask ourselves to help us meditate on the passage we are reading:

- Is it a story or is it speaking to someone?

If it is a story:

- Who is the main character?
- What happened to them?
- How am I similar to them?
- What can I learn from this that applies to my life today?

If it’s a message to someone:

- Who is its audience?
- Am I part of the audience?
- What can I learn from this?
- What does it have to do with my life/ what I’m going through today?

Let’s practise finding, reading, and analysing according to what we have learnt with the passage of **Mark 2:1-2**.

What have I learnt from this passage?

We have looked at daily prayer. To this, we should add reading the Bible. The first few days we will read the book of Mark, also called the Gospel of Mark. This is one of the four gospels. Each gospel tells facts of Jesus’ life and the words He said.

After this, we will read the gospel of John and for this we will have a guide ready. Our advice is that we should read at least one chapter a day.

What to Read each day:

Try to give yourself a structure in your reading, splitting your reading so you can achieve your goals. It will also help you catch up if you miss any readings, and will help you understand deeper what you have read. You can also go back on your notes and reflect further on your understanding of the passages.

Use the templates on the following pages to help you...

Title of Book: _____

About the author:

Context:
(Geographical and Historical situation at the time)

Theme / Objective of the book:

Specific points to think about:

Book: _____ Month _____

Day	Chapter	Summary
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