



Let's be honest ... the Bible is intimidating. The biggest reason? It's not like any other book!

The Bible is not always in chronological order; it contains different genres of literature; it has 40 different authors; and it was written over a span of 2,000 years.

So as a **[Your Church Or Ministry Name Here]** family, we want to consider together what it means to have "God with us." Ultimately, the Bible is about the good news that Jesus came into our world to rescue us from death. As the author of life, He wrote Himself into the story to bring His people back into a relationship with Him. Using this booklet as a guide, we want to help you explore what it is like to actually have a relationship with our Rescuer. One way major way we do that is through reading the Bible, God's words to us.

Have you ever thought about that? You may have longed for the audible voice of God to tell you where to go to college or which lovely lady to ask to homecoming, but the God who made the stars and dew drops and freckles on your face has chosen to speak to YOU and even write it down so you don't forget. Consider it God's really long text message to you.

So, we invite you to try this whole, reading-what-God-is-speaking-to-me-through-the-Bible thing. We challenge you to pick it up 21 times in the next month.

It's not extra homework—it's the answer you've been looking for to fill that gap inside your heart that no one else sees.

God with us.
God's words to us.

Let's hang out with Him. Together.

Using this journal ...

Purpose: Pursue a relationship with God through reading the Bible.

Goal: Pick up your Bible 21 times before the month is over.

What do I read: A portion of Psalm 119 and one chapter of the book of John each time you sit down. [The quotes in this guide are from the New Living Translation (NLT).]

What not to do: Don't beat yourself up for not being perfect. The goal here is not perfection. There are no gold stars for the person who does this 21 days in a row—just like there are no demerits for those who only pick it up 5 times. Remember—the purpose is to have a relationship with Jesus.

Tools to Help:

Each section in this journal will give you four prompts to help you engage with God's Word so you can understand it:



Read: Read the text all the way through, read it a couple times, read it out loud, or listen to it on your YouVersion Bible app.

Think: What did you just read? Who are the characters? What does this word mean? What is the setting? And most importantly, what does it say about who God is?

Pray: Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you and encourage you and help you understand what you read.

Apply: Based on what God has said to you through His words, what will you do with Him and what He has said? Put these words into practice in your everyday life.

Tips: Turn off your phone or put it on airplane mode; find a quiet place where you can be alone with no distractions; turn on some Christian worship music; read outside or by a window to see God's creation; ASK

QUESTIONS to your friends, small group, or small group leader about what you are reading; and don't do this on your own. Start a group text with your small group for accountability and encouragement. Then put these verses as your lock screen or on your mirror so you remember them.

DAY 1

Read:

Psalm 119:1-2 & John 1

Think:

From Psalm 119:

Why do you think that you would be more joyful if you searched for God with all your heart and obeyed His commands?

From John 1:

Who or what is the Word in this passage? Why is it such a big deal that “the Word made His home among us?” (vs. 14) What does John the Baptist mean by Jesus being the Messiah? (vs. 31) How does that affect you?

Pray:

Ask God to help you see that His commands are for your good, not just to tell you what to do. Ask Him to fill you with joy as you follow Him as His disciple and delight in His Word.

Apply:

What one command is God calling you to obey that you are ignoring? Obey Him this week in that command, and trust that God will fill you with more joy because of it.

DAY 2

Read:

Psalm 119:9-11 & John 2

Think:

From Psalm 119:

What do you think it means to “hide God’s Word in your heart?” How would obeying God help you to “find Him when you try?”

From John 2:

Why do you think it is significant that Jesus’ first miracle was at a party? We sometimes think of Jesus as just a quiet man in a robe, but how does this story from verses 13-21 show a different side of Jesus’ character? What made Him so mad?

Pray:

Take time to pray Psalm 119:9-11 as your prayer. Ask God to purify your heart and help you see yourself the way He does: as His beloved son or daughter. Continue to ask Him to show you how obeying Him will bring you more satisfying joy.

Apply:

Put Psalm 119:9-11 somewhere that you will see it daily—your mirror or school binder. In order to hide God’s Word in your heart, you need to read it and soak in it on a daily basis so that it sticks in your memory.

DAY 3

Read:

Psalm 119:14-16 & John 3

Think:

From Psalm 119:

In what ways do you often get it backwards and rejoice in “riches” over God’s laws? What things often distract you from following Jesus on a daily basis?

From John 3:

What did Jesus mean when He told Nicodemus that he had to be “born again”? Have you been “born again”? What changed about you when you said yes to Jesus and became a new creation in Him?

Pray:

Ask God to teach your heart to love Him and His presence more than money, possessions, relationships, success, or power. Thank God for the specific ways that He has and is changing you to look more like Him.

Apply:

Just like John the Baptist did in verses 22-36 of John, “prepare the way” for Jesus this week. Talk to someone at school this week who isn’t a Christian about how God is changing your life.

DAY 4

Read:

Psalm 119:27-29 & John 4

Think:

From Psalm 119:

How have you been “lying to (your)self” lately?

From John 4:

Why do you think the Samaritan woman was at the well by herself during the hottest point of the day? How would you have responded to Jesus if He looked into your heart the way He did with this woman?

Pray:

Ask Jesus to reveal the sin that you have not given over to Him yet. Let His grace and truth speak into your heart. Embrace His forgiveness and invitation to give you “living water.”

Apply:

Practice setting and keeping an un-rushed date with Jesus this week. Just like you wouldn't ditch a friend you were going to hang out with, keep this appointment. Schedule it into your phone with an alert. When it's time, turn your phone off and leave it in another room while you spend time with Jesus. Consider writing your prayers down in a notebook or listening to worship music and singing praises to God.

DAY 5

Read:

Psalms 119:36-37 & John 5

Think:

From Psalm 119:

The writer of this Psalm understood that there were times he wanted material possessions more than the presence of God. What “worthless things” distract you from the satisfying “life through (God’s) Word”?

From John 5:

“The Son can do nothing by Himself; he does only what He sees the Father doing” (vs. 19). We cannot change ourselves, heal what cripples us, or desire God’s Word on our own. Only by surrendering to Jesus’ authority can we truly be free to live and give. What in your life do you still claim authority over?

Pray:

Pray that Jesus would soften your heart to the loving authority He has over you: a submission that leads to true joy.

Apply:

Pick a paragraph, sentence, or word from the reading, and reflect on it for awhile. Find out why resting in God’s Word brings more pleasure than the world can give.

DAY 6

Read:

Psalm 119:41 & John 6

Think:

From Psalm 119:

How has earthly love failed you in your life? How do your negative experiences with love cause you to distrust God's "unfailing love"?

From John 6:

Verse 35 says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Jesus wasn't talking about food. He was using this language to show that He is all we will ever need. What are you hungry and thirsty for that has not yet been satisfied? Is it acceptance, popularity, awards, the latest gadget, more likes, or a pretty girlfriend or cute boyfriend?

Pray:

God, thank you for your unfailing love for me. I know that I'm searching for "food" that won't satisfy me. Help me to see that you are all I need!

Apply:

Fast from a meal today. Every time you feel your stomach grumble, let it be a reminder to talk to Jesus and remember that he is the "food" that fills you up and never leaves you hungry.

DAY 7

Read:

Psalm 119:54-55 & John 7

Think:

From Psalm 119:

Verse 54 says, “Your decrees have been the theme of my songs.” What’s your favorite song? Did you know that many of the Psalms were actually lyrics to worship music? How much time would you spend worshipping if you replaced Justin Bieber or Twenty One Pilots with worship music? How would that change “the theme of [your] songs?”

From John 7:

John 7:50-51 says, “Then Nicodemus, the leader who had met with Jesus earlier, spoke up. ‘Is it legal to convict a man before he is given a hearing?’ he asked.” Many people judge Jesus and Christianity without actually getting to know Jesus for themselves. How well do you know Jesus *from experience*, rather than just knowing *about* him?

Pray:

May my heart always sing of your truth and your goodness, Lord. Purify my mind from all the lies I’ve let my eyes see and my ears hear. Help me to embrace your forgiveness and worship you today in my mind, actions, and words. I worship you because you are my Father and my Friend.

Apply:

Make a playlist with some of your favorite songs we sing at church. Spend time simply experiencing Jesus in worship.

DAY 8

Read:

Psalms 119:57-58 & John 8

Think:

From Psalm 119:

How does it affect your view of God to know that He promises to always have mercy on you when you mess up? What blessings do you think God wants to give you?

From John 8:

How in your life right now are you judging someone who is a “sinner?” What was it like for you when God had mercy on you the way He did on the woman caught in adultery?

Pray:

God, I know “you are the light of the world and if I follow you I won’t have to walk in darkness, because you have the light that leads to life!” (John 8:12). Show me what that means, and give me the courage to let go of the darkness I cling to, and trust that life in the light is better.

Apply:

Live out John 8:32—“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free”—today by sharing the truth about God’s mercy when we mess up. Share it with someone who feels like an outcast or is beating themselves up for their sin. Just like Jesus, say to them, “I don’t condemn you. *Let me show you a better way.*” (John 8:11, *paraphrase mine*)

DAY 9

Read:

Psalm 119:72 & John 9

Think:

From Psalm 119:

Many people put their hope in a dollar sign, believing more money or clothes or the latest iPhone will quench their soul-deep thirst. What “instructions” that God gives in his Word have given you more freedom in your life?

From John 9:

Examining verses 39-41, why does Jesus say that the religious leaders—the Pharisees—are blind? How could someone religious be considered blind? In what ways has your pride blinded you?

Pray:

God, humble me. I know that I’ve been blinded by pride and I need your grace to show me how to see again in light of the good news about your Son, Jesus. Help me to see others the way you do.

Apply:

Apologize this week to someone who may have been hurt by your pride. Who is it that you have thought yourself “better than?” Get them one-on-one, and give them a sincere apology and explain how God convicted you and is teaching you how to love like Him. This could be an incredible opportunity to witness to someone who doesn’t know Jesus.

DAY 10

Read:

Psalm 119:73-74 & John 10

Think:

From Psalm 119:

Jesus knows you better than anyone. He knows the good and bad, and yet He loves you more deeply than anyone in this world. How do you see yourself when you look in the mirror?

From John 10:

Take a look at verse 14. Jesus wants to lead you to the most fulfilling life possible. On a daily basis, how much do you actually trust your good shepherd is leading you down the best path?

Pray:

God, help me to see myself the way you see me. Give me a humble confidence in who you have made me to be, and remind me that I am treasured by you. Help me to trust you as the Good Shepherd and to follow your lead. I know you will take me on the greatest adventure if you are my guide.

Apply:

What decisions have you been trying to make on your own in the last month? Could it be who to date and how far you should go with them, if you should go to the party, where to go to college, if you should cheat on your math homework again? Pick one decision you have been making on your own and commit to letting God lead you. Invite another Christian friend or your youth pastor to help you discern what the Bible says about that subject. Take this small step to help you begin to give your whole life over to Jesus: the Good Shepherd.

DAY 11

Read:

Psalm 119:76-77 & John 11

Think:

From Psalm 119:

The Psalmist asks the Lord to “surround me with your tender mercies so I may live.” What “tender mercies” do you need from God today?

From John 11:

Check out verse 44 again. Jesus removed the death from Lazarus, He breathed life into his lungs, and removed his grave clothes. What grave clothes does Jesus need to take off of you in your life?

Pray:

Ask Jesus to raise you to life in Him, whether for the first time or the hundredth. Ask him to remove your grave clothes and clothe you with His tender mercies and love.

Apply:

Write Psalm 119:76-77 on your mirror with a dry erase marker so that each morning this week, you can meditate on it, memorize it, and live it.

DAY 12

Read:

Psalm 119:81-84 & John 12

Think:

From Psalm 119:

Why do you think the writer of this Psalm can still put his hope in God's Word even when his "eyes are strained, he doesn't feel God, and is tired of waiting for God's reply"? How quick are you to give up on God when you don't "feel Him" or He doesn't give you the response you are looking for in the timing that you want it?

From John 12:

Why was it such a big deal that Mary poured the perfume on Jesus' feet? How do you want to be like Mary in your relationship with God?

Pray:

Ask God to give you confidence in His presence and His power in your life, even when you don't feel it. Spend a few minutes praying and worshipping God the way Mary did for the sheer beauty of who He is.

Apply:

Today, instead of giving up on God when you don't feel Him, pray instead. Even if you don't hear anything back or get goose bumps, cry out to Him the way the Psalmist did.

DAY 13

Read:

Psalm 119:89-92 & John 13

Think:

From Psalm 119:

Where in your life have you seen God be faithful to you? How has He kept his promises?

From John 13:

What stands out to you in this story of Jesus washing His disciples' feet? What does it say about Christ's love, even then knowing which of His disciples would betray Him? With this story in mind, how does Jesus' exhortation in verse 34 compel you to love your family, your friends, and even your enemies?

Pray:

Jesus, thank you for being so faithful to me even when I am faithless. Help me to see how much you love me, that I would be able to love everyone I cross paths with today, no matter what they do to me. Thank you for dying on the cross for me and keeping your promise to rescue me from death.

Apply:

Look for a way to serve someone today the way Jesus served the disciples by washing their stinky feet. How could you go out of your way to show someone sacrificial love?

DAY 14

Read:

Psalms 119:105-108 & John 14

Think:

From Psalm 119:

How has God led your life in the last year? What in your life seems dark and hazy? How might shining the light of God's Word onto your situation help you to see more clearly how God is at work?

From John 14:

In verses 16-18, Jesus explains that He will send another "Advocate" so we don't have to be alone. That's the Holy Spirit. We have to understand that God is one, but displays Himself in three ways: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. Think of Him like water: solid, liquid, gas. It's all water, but in three forms. The Holy Spirit is God's presence with us always. How has the Holy Spirit been a part of your life? How have you been comforted by God (John 14), given boldness to share the good news about Jesus (Acts 4), or convicted of your sin (John 16)? These are only some of the ways God the Holy Spirit works in our lives.

Pray:

Thank you, God, for giving me the gift of the Holy Spirit—your presence with me always. Shine a light on my path as I open your Word and obey your commands.

Apply:

Make a list in your school notebook of ways you see God's Holy Spirit at work around you this week. When you feel convicted, listen to that nudge. When you feel compelled to talk to someone about Jesus, do it! When you follow the Holy Spirit's direction, you will see and be a part of miracles!

DAY 15

Read:

Psalms 119:116-117 & John 15

Think:

From Psalm 119:

What are the main things that crush your hope? What do you think it would look like in a practical way for God to sustain you when you lose hope?

From John 15:

What do the words “vine,” “branches,” and “fruit” symbolize in this passage? How does Jesus say we “remain” in God? How have you let others “hating you” for being a Christian “crush” you? What does John 15:18-26 say is inevitable if you are following Christ?

Pray:

God, I pray for the Holy Spirit's boldness and faithfulness today to remain in you and stick close to you. Sustain me when I feel crushed and discouraged. Don't let me give up because I know that you will rescue me and you are in control.

Apply:

Practice “remaining” close to God throughout your day today. Rather than feeling like all your prayers need to have a “Dear God” and an “amen,” keep the conversation going with short quick prayers about all the different things you are doing throughout your day.

DAY 16

Read:

Psalms 119: 123-125 & John 16

Think:

From Psalm 119:

What does *discernment* mean? How do you lack discernment in your life right now? How has God given you discernment when you were faced with a difficult choice?

From John 16:

How badly do you want to be happy? What do you think the difference between joy and happiness is? What does verse 24 say will bring you joy?

Pray:

I'm in awe of your love for me, Father. Thank you for promising me joy in the name of Jesus. Give me wisdom and discernment. Thank you for your Holy Spirit so that I don't have to figure out my life alone.

Apply:

This week, make a running list of all the things you are thankful for. See how many you can get up to. Name the big things and the small things throughout your day. Watch to see how thankfulness to God leads to true joy even when circumstances aren't ideal.

DAY 17

Read:

Psalms 119:132-136 & John 17

Think:

From Psalm 119:

It is so easy to be overcome by evil because we live in a broken world. We can often get so caught up and so discouraged that we just give in. We get tired of fighting. The problem is that we are fighting on our own strength, and relying on our own power and wit to resist temptation, rather than fighting from Christ's victory that He has already won for us on the cross. How have you been trying to overcome temptation on your own strength? What would it look like for you to fight *from* victory instead of *for* victory?

From John 17:

How would you sum up Jesus' prayer for His disciples and for future Christians everywhere? How does it make you feel that Jesus was praying for YOU over 2,000 years ago?

Pray:

Don't pray for yourself today. Make a list of all the people in your life instead. Ask God who He wants you to pray for and write their names down. Spend time lifting up each name to God and interceding on their behalf. Ask God to bless them and pray for their needs that you know about.

Apply:

Ask each of your friends (not just your Christian ones) this week how you can pray for them. They may think it's weird at first, but it's not weird unless you make it weird. Tell them you just care about them and want God to bless them.

DAY 18

Read:

Psalms 119:143-144 & John 18

Think:

From Psalm 119:

What pressure and stress are bearing down on your life right now? How could God's commands bring you joy amid that stress? Who do you need to reach out to today for help? How might sharing your struggles with your youth pastor or another Christian friend lift your burdens?

From John 18:

How can you relate to Peter in this passage? Where have your intentions to follow Jesus dried up when you faced adversity? How has your popularity or desire to fit in caused you to say you believe in Jesus but live counter to that claim?

Pray:

God, I know I've denied you. Please forgive me for putting my desire to be accepted before staying loyal to you. Thank you for always having mercy for me and never denying me. Lift my stress and burdens, and help me to see things in perspective that you are in control and have a wonderful plan for my life.

Apply:

Reach out to your youth pastor or another Christian friend today. Ask them to meet for coffee or ice cream, and ask them for help in the areas you are struggling. If you can't meet up, talk to them on the phone (I know it's scary—but don't just have a text conversation). Let them encourage you and pray for you.

DAY 19

Read:

Psalms 119:149-152 & John 19

Think:

From Psalm 119:

How do you need to be revived today? How does God's nearness speak to your exhaustion, confusion, or frustration?

From John 19:

Why did Jesus have to die on the cross? Why does His death change your life?

Pray:

God, thank you for making a way for me to get back in relationship with you by sending your Son to die in my place. I don't deserve it, but you are the God of ridiculous love and grace. Revive my heart today, no matter my circumstances, with the truth of the gospel that you were crucified for me and now I'm free.

Apply:

Who in your life today needs to hear about Jesus' death on the cross for them? As you walk through your day, keep your eyes open for opportunities to share this good news and speak out with the words given to you by the Holy Spirit.

DAY 20

Read:

Psalm 119:162-165 & John 20

Think:

From Psalm 119:

Why would the Psalmist liken God's Word to finding a treasure? How has the Bible become more precious to you this month? How has your relationship with Jesus grown?

From John 20:

How have you experienced resurrection because of Jesus? What areas of your life has He healed and made new? If He hasn't, what brokenness do you need restored? How have you seen that God is with you throughout this month?

Pray:

God, thinking back to how you saved me from my sin and my selfishness, I'm overwhelmed. Thank you for giving me a new start and a new life. Thank you for forgetting my past and promising me a bright future with you. Heal what needs to be mended in my life and help me to see that you are my treasure.

Apply:

Ask one of your non-Christian friends to get ice cream with you this week. Share your story with them about how Jesus was raised to life and how you were raised to life too because of him. Ask that person their life story and really listen to them; empathizing with their struggles. Be courageous because you know that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you (the Holy Spirit)! Invite them to come to church with you this week.

DAY 21

Read:

Psalm 119:169-170 & John 21

Think:

From Psalm 119:

How would your family, friends, and teachers respond if your attitude in life changed to “I live so I can praise God”?

From John 21:

Why do you think Jesus asked Peter the same question three times? What did Jesus mean by “feed my sheep”? How is God calling you to feed His sheep and help others realize that God is with us?

Pray:

Let me live so I can praise you, God! Give me courage to feed your sheep. Thank you for sending Jesus, Emmanuel (God with us). Thank you for showing me how you truly are with me always and want to be a part of everything I do in life. Thank you for the Bible, your Word, and for not leaving me to figure it out on my own.

Apply:

Hey, you did it!

How is God calling YOU to apply what you read in his Word today?

You hung out with God 21 times.

We are proud of you for seeking out a relationship with the living God! We hope that you have a newfound love and understanding of how to use the Bible because of this little journal. We pray that this is only the beginning of

God is with us

a lifetime of pursuing Jesus.