

Essentials for Success

What are the four essentials to being a successful Christian?

- A) Read your Bible each day.
- B) Pray each day.
- C) Participate in a local church.
- D) Witness to your family, friends, co-workers and others.

Why is it important to read my Bible and pray every day?

- A) The fundamental building block of life and living is the day. Bible reading and prayer need to become part of that normal cycle.
- B) Bible reading and prayer are to you spiritually what food is to you physically—you need it every day in order to live and grow properly.
- C) Each day you face many decisions. You also face the attacks and temptations of the enemy. Bible reading and prayer prepare you for the things that happen each day.

How can I make Bible reading and prayer a daily habit?

- A) It's important to form good habits early in your Christian walk. These habits will save you trouble in the months and years ahead.
- B) Here are some steps you can take to make Bible reading and prayer a daily habit:
 - (1) **Motivation.** You cannot form a new habit without proper motivation. Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of your new habit. Keep it near your Bible to remind you of the importance of what you are doing.

(2) **Commitment.** Every day purpose in your heart and mind that you are committed to doing these things on a daily basis. Ask God to help you stand firm. You may also want to make yourself accountable to someone who can help you keep your commitment.

(3) **Planning.** The devil will resist what you are doing! He will try to stop you any way he can. That's why it's important to prepare:

(a) Associate it with something you already do consistently each day.

(b) Try to do it at the same time each day if possible. Beware procrastination!

(c) Watch your environment. Do it in an area where you are free from distractions and interruptions.

(4) **Keep a record.** Record keeping is important to creating new habits. Studies show that it takes around 30–60 consecutive days to form a new habit. Take a sheet of paper and make a row for each day. Make a check mark each day to show your progress. Keep marks for the entire period and even longer if helpful.

(5) **Reward yourself.** For example, every 7 days of consistent progress might mean a special treat.

(6) **Sacrifice.** It may (and probably will) take extra effort to make Bible reading and prayer happen on a daily basis (Mark 1:35). Remember your motivation!

What should I do if I miss a day?

A) **Don't be discouraged!** The enemy will tell you to give up and that you'll never be able to do it consistently. He is lying! With God's help, all things are possible (Philippians 4:13). Resist his attempts to talk you into giving up.

B) **Analyze.** Ask yourself the question, "Why did I not follow through today?" Many times the answer is something that you can avoid in the future. Take that into account and plan accordingly.

C) **Ask God for help.** It's important for you to remember that you can't live the Christian life in your own strength. You need God's help each day. These lessons will give you many ideas and strategies for success, but ultimately, it is God's grace that will give you the victory.

D) **Remember.** Remind yourself of your motivation and commitment. Purpose to do better tomorrow and in the future.

Why is participating in a local church important to being a successful Christian?

A) **Survival.** When you became a Christian, you became a part of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). The body of Christ is made up of everyone who is born again. Just as one part of your physical body can't survive when separated from the whole, so you can't survive without the fellowship of other believers.

B) **Encouragement and support.** Hebrews 10:24–25 says, “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.” (NLT)

C) **Accountability.** This is one of the most important factors in being a successful Christian. Becoming part of a local church makes you accountable—people will check on you and ask you how things are going. That is why you should make a point of being around fellow Christians as much as possible.

(1) If you find that you are struggling in a certain area, seek out an older, mature believer and make yourself accountable to them. Many times this will help you overcome something that you cannot on your own.

What is witnessing and why is it important?

A) Witnessing is telling others the good news (Gospel) about Jesus Christ and sharing your conversion story with them.

B) As a new convert, witnessing will help you in several areas:

(1) **It will reaffirm your new life in Christ.** You will find that the devil likes to put doubts in your mind about your salvation. Telling others about your new birth will help to overcome those doubts.

(2) **It will remind you that people are watching you.** You witness by both word and deed—many times your actions are more important than your words. People will notice the change in your life and they'll be watching closely to see if it's genuine. They may even test you to see how you react.

(3) **It will encourage you to study the Bible.** When you witness to others, people will ask you questions about God and the Bible. Those questions will motivate you to learn.

(4) **It will build you up spiritually.** There is nothing like the experience of helping someone repent of their sins and commit their life to God. It builds your faith and strengthens your commitment to Christ. (List advantages of developing a Bible reading and praying habit, and also the disadvantages of not developing such habit.)

Reading God's Word

What is the Bible?

A) The Bible is a collection of 66 separate writings which are called books.

(1) The Bible was written by more than forty authors from every walk of life, including kings, military leaders, peasants, philosophers, fisherman, tax collectors, poets, musicians, statesmen, scholars and shepherds.

(2) The Bible was written to kings, nations, slave-owners, churches, Jews, Gentiles, and individuals of all backgrounds.

(3) The Bible contains personal letters, poetry, songs, historical narratives, biographies, romance, rhetoric, satire, law, prophecy, and parables.

(4) The Bible was written over a period of 1,500 years. It was written in times of war and peace. It was written on three continents—Asia, Africa and Europe—and in places as varied as a desert, a dungeon, an island and a palace.

B) The Bible is divided into two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament records the history of Israel prior to the coming of Christ. The New Testament records the life of Jesus and the history of the early church.

What makes the Bible different from other books?

A) The Bible makes a radical claim—it claims to be the “Word of God.”

(1) **The claim:** 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us “All Scripture is God-breathed (inspired) and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (NIV). This passage is the key text for the doctrine of inspiration. The Bible has literally been breathed out from God.

(2) **The method:** 2 Peter 1:20–21 tells us “Above all, you do well if you recognize this: no prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet's own imagination, for no prophecy was ever borne of human impulse; rather, men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (NET). God, acting through the Holy Spirit, caused various men to record the exact words that He desired. This means the Bible is not the product of men's minds, but rather of God Himself.

B) In summary, inspiration is the process by which Spirit-moved writers produced God-breathed words. This makes the Bible unique from other books—it is the authoritative Word of God.

There are so many different translations. Which one should I read?

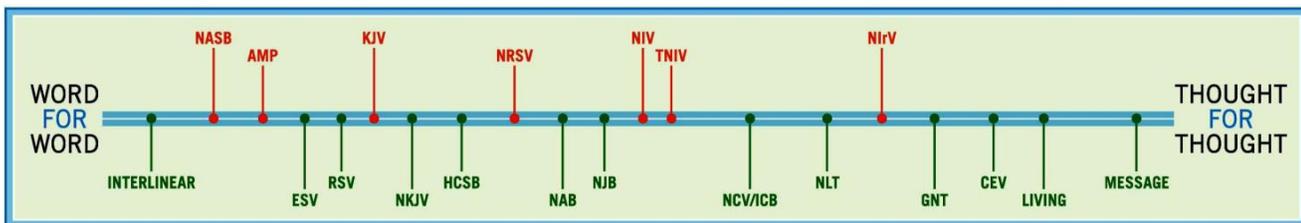
A) The Bible was originally written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. The Bibles we have today are translations into English from the original languages.¹

B) There are two general methods of Bible translation:

(1) Word-for-Word (Formal Equivalence) – this method attempts to translate each word of the original language into English and tries to preserve the original word order and sentence structure as much as possible. Word-for-word translations are excellent for study.

(2) Thought-for-Thought (Dynamic Equivalence) – this method seeks to understand what the original text is saying and then translate that thought into English at the expense of literalness and original word order. Thought-for-thought translations are helpful for ease of reading.

TRANSLATION CONTINUUM



C) For your main Bible (study

This continuum shows how different Bible translations fit into the word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation philosophies.

purposes), it is recommended to use the ESV or NASB. The ones from Cambridge University Press are beautiful (distributed in USA by Baker Publishing Group). The craftsmanship is excellent and the text is clear and easy to read with plenty of space for note taking. If you can afford it (they are expensive), get French Morocco leather or Goatskin—it will last a lifetime.

D) For your reference Bible, I recommend “Today’s Parallel Bible” from Zondervan. It has the KJV, NASB, NIV and NLT versions side-by-side for you to compare and contrast. This is very useful and will get you in the habit of checking other translations.

¹ The following is a list of version abbreviations: NASB = New American Standard Bible, AMP = Amplified Bible, ESV = English Standard Version, RSV = Revised Standard Version, KJV = King James Version, NKJV = New King James Version, HCSB = Holman Christian Standard Bible, NRSV = New Revised Standard Version, NAB = New American Bible, NJB = New Jerusalem Bible, NIV = New International Version, TNIV = Today’s New International Version, NCV = New Century Version, NET = New English Translation, NLT = New Living Translation, NIrV = New International Reader’s Version, GNT = Good News Translation (Today’s English Version), CEV = Contemporary English Version, LIVING = The Living Bible, MESSAGE = The Message, LEB = Lexham English Bible.

E) If you would like to purchase a Bible for your children, we recommend the “Picture Bible” by Iva Hoth and the “Illustrated Bible: Complete New Testament” by Keith Neely.

F) If you enjoy reading the Bible online, we recommend BibleGateway.com and Bible.is. You can also use an app like YouVersion.

How do I find things in the Bible?

A) If you’re new to the Bible, I recommend using book tabs. You can buy the tabs at any Christian bookstore. Some will even put them on for you.

B) Books of the Bible are often referred to by their abbreviations (e.g., Gen for Genesis).

C) As you work your way through the lessons on the website, be sure to look up each Scripture reference. This will give you practice with locating verses in the Bible.

Where should I start reading?

A) The “New Testament Reading Plan” in our church app is an excellent way to start a day habit of reading God’s word.

B) Once you finish this or another basic reading plan, you will be ready to read larger sections of Scripture. However, because many books in the Bible are difficult to read and understand, I recommend that you start with the easier books. The “Bible Books in Reading Order” handout on the website will help you with this (the easiest books are listed first with the difficulty level increasing as you go).

C) For those who are ready to read the entire Bible, Youversion has yearly plans.

D) Topical Reading. Sometimes you will want to read what the Bible has to say about a certain topic (e.g. divorce, homosexuality, baptism, angels).

How much should I read each day?

A) If you’re not working through a particular reading plan, I recommend that you read at least one chapter each day. Sometimes you may read more and occasionally less, but a chapter a day is a good rule of thumb.

I'm not a good reader. How do I get something out of what I read?

A) Ask questions—questions are the key to understanding. You should always have a pen and paper when you read the Bible. As you read, write down any questions you have about the meaning of the text. If you can, answer the questions yourself by thinking about the verses and studying the context. Save those you can't answer for church or Bible study (2 Timothy 2:7). Consider the following example:

(1) “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:5–7, NET).

(2) Here are some questions you could ask:

- What does it mean that “God is Light”?
- What does it mean to “walk in darkness”?
- What does it mean to “walk in the light”?

(3) You could answer these questions as follows:

“God is light” means that God is truth. If I “walk in darkness” then I’m living in lies and wickedness, but if I “walk in the light” then I’m living in truth and obedience to God.

(4) An important takeaway from this passage is that you cannot be a Christian and continue to practice willful sin. If you claim otherwise, you are a liar (see 1 John 2:4).

(5) Consider this quote: “People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful” (John Dewey). I encourage you to form the habit of asking questions of the text.

B) Apply what you read by asking yourself these two questions:

(1) Does this passage challenge any of my values, beliefs, or attitudes? The focus here is on your internal thinking. For practice, try applying Philippians 3:8.

(2) Does this passage challenge the way I act or speak? The focus here is on your outward behavior. For practice, try applying Philippians 2:14–15.