

Kids and parents in conversation.

HomeWord

Reading the Bible:

What can you get out of reading the Bible?

Teen Talk

The Bible—also called the sacred Scriptures—tells the story of the loving relationship between God and humankind. It brings people to a deeper relationship with God, teaches important truths about Christian faith, and challenges how we live our life and relate with other people.

Christians make a fantastic claim about the Bible: God is the author of the sacred Scriptures. They believe that the Bible is God’s word, containing the truths that God wishes to reveal to human kind for our salvation. Through the Holy Spirit, God inspired the human authors of the Bible’s books to reveal these truths in their writings. These two concepts—God’s **inspiration** of the biblical authors and God’s **revelation** in their writings of the truths about God and God’s will for us—are two important Christian beliefs about the Bible.

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people’s experience of God. In fact, many of the books had more than one author. Some books went through several decades of development in which the stories were told and retold, written down, combined,

and edited. The Church believes the Holy Spirit was guiding the many people involved through the whole process.

Reading and Studying the Bible

Sometimes when you pick up the Bible, you want to study and learn. Maybe you want to learn some Bible history or understand more about Baptism. Maybe you want to know why the Gospel of John is so different from the other Gospels. These are concerns of the head, the intellect.

Sometimes when you pick up the Bible, you are hungry to grow closer to God. You want to experience God’s presence in your life or receive guidance about a problem. These are concerns of the heart, the soul. ▼

Parent Talk

As a college student in the mid-seventies, I was part of an ecumenical Bible study. Born and raised Catholic, I attended Mass regularly growing up. I was even a lector in my small country parish as a teen. Yet I had not cracked open a Bible on my own more than two or three times. So my friends in the Bible study had to teach me some basic Bible skills, such as how to locate specific passages and how to interpret particular Scripture teachings in light of the Bible’s bigger themes.

In many respects you could say I was functionally biblically illiterate. Of even greater concern was my lack of biblically based faith and values. Despite my participation in the Eucharist week after week, I still held

the materialistic and self-absorbed values of popular culture. It was my involvement in the Bible study group and my own personal reading of the Scriptures that became the catalyst for a personal conversion to a Gospel-centered spirituality.

Biblical literacy among Catholic youth today isn’t much different from my experience of twenty-five years ago. Most Catholic teens cannot name the four Gospels. In a Gallup study in the early 1990s, only 20 percent of Catholic youth, compared to 60 percent of Christian youth from other denominations, claimed to have ever read the Bible on their own. . . .

Getting young people to read the Bible is not enough. Helping teens to use the Bible to grow in their faith is also necessary. We must encourage students to pray with the Bible and to live out the Bible’s values. This holistic approach is captured in the Saint Mary’s Press “Pray It! Study It! Live It!” Scripture motto. Just as with adults, teens’ minds, hearts, and wills are organically

connected. We must find ways to touch our young people’s hearts and wills with God’s word as well as educating their minds about it.

We have two goals, then, if we hope to meet the challenge of bringing Catholic youth and the Bible together. The first is ▼

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Teen Talk *continued*

Ask God to touch both your head and heart when you read the Bible. It is important to be open to both because we were created to be whole people.

The PRIMA Process

Prima is the Latin word for “first.” In the PRIMA process, each letter of the word stands for a step in reading and studying the Bible individually or with a group. Using the PRIMA process helps you remember to keep God first in your life!

Pray. Begin with a prayer that your time with the Bible will draw you closer to God.

Read attentively, trusting that God will give you what you need to learn or grow.

Imagine what was going on when the passage was first written. What is its cultural and historical context? Try

to put yourself into the story. What was the author trying to get across?

Meditate on what you have read. How does it fit in the context of the rest of the Bible’s teaching? with the Church’s teaching? What do you think God is teaching you?

Apply what you have read to your life. God may be calling you to address a particular issue or relationship. Or you may find words of comfort and support you need at this particular time. Carry God’s word into the rest of your day, the rest of your life!

Adapted from The Catholic Youth Bible, New American Bible translation, edited by Brian Singer-Towns (Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 2000), pages xii and xv.



Parent Talk *continued*

developing biblical literacy in our teens. And the second is helping them foster a biblical spirituality.

Accomplishing these goals may require some changes in how we use the Scriptures with young people.

For instance, rather than have them read about the Bible in some other book, we must challenge them to plunge into the Bible itself. Rather than teach them what the Bible says, we must help them discover on their own what the Bible teaches. Rather than use the Bible solely as proof text, we must help them to see the Bible as a living text that can change their life. . . .

And most important, let us listen to the Spirit speaking through our young people. Bringing Catholic youth and the Bible together—we can do it!

Brian Singer-Towns in the Bringing Catholic Youth and the Bible Together: Strategies and Activities for Parishes and Schools (Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 2000), pages 7–9. Brian Singer-Towns is also the general editor of The Catholic Youth Bible published by Saint Mary’s Press.



Spend Time with the Word

Make the Bible your traveling companion. Pick it up with ease. Go to it first when faced with a problem or a difficulty. Use the daily or Sunday readings from the lectionary cycle as a source for your own prayer. Or read through a Gospel or another Bible book over a given period of time. As you read and pray, keep a journal of your insights and your questions. With the Scriptures, as with faith, the questions are more important than the answers.

A simple process for unlocking the powerful Word of God is to probe a passage with the following questions:

- Is there a word about God in this passage?
- Is there a word from God for me?
- Is there a word from God for God’s people?

Bringing Catholic Youth and the Bible Together,
edited by Brian Singer-Towns (Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 2000), page 20

Pray It!

This book can change your life. The Bible’s essential message is this: God **LOVES** us and wants to be in a lifelong friendship with us. The Bible tells the story of God’s love, revealed most perfectly in Jesus’ **life, death, and RESURRECTION**. Through Christ, God offers us forgiveness, freedom, companionship, and **new** life. It is a wonderful gift, but we must choose to **ACCEPT** it. How will you **respond** to that invitation?

The Catholic Youth Bible, New American Bible translation, edited by Brian Singer-Towns (Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 2000), page facing page i.

HomeWord, edited by Leif Kehrwald, is published monthly for parish bulletins and individual households by Family Faith-Life Resources (FFLR) of Saint Mary’s Press. Reprint permission is granted for distribution within your parish or institution. For more information on FFLR, visit us on the Web at www.smp.org.

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