

Faith Formation Scripture

S t . I g n a t i u s L o y o l a P a r i s h

Understanding the Bible

Planning your Biblical Journey

- What Bible should I use? What does it mean to say a Bible is Catholic?
- I understand that there are different translations. Which translation would be best for me?
- What's a "study bible" and should I get one of those?
- What's a concordance, a commentary, a dictionary and an atlas?
- Are there different parts of the bible?

A professor at the seminary I attended once remarked that he loved teaching scripture to Catholics, it was the first time many had actually opened the bible.

I must admit that his pointed remark actually had a ring of truth because many of us are used to having the Scriptures read to us on Sunday and have not spent time just reading them ourselves.

One exercise that some engage in is simply reading

the Bible, cover to cover. And for a number of folks this takes more than a year to complete.

While there is much to recommend this great project, it might be more helpful to stand back and plan out your project with a bit more planning. There are

parts of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) that can be tedious or scandalous.

See: <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Reading-Bible.htm> for some sample plans.



A tour guide approach to your journey through Scripture

Inside this issue:

Reading Scriptures	1
Why Read Scriptures	1
Bible Reading vs Study	2

Why do I want to read the Bible?

Most textbooks are not easy reading. They are packed with data and information and seldom flow with a compelling style. They are not meant for an evening of home meditation and prayer.

Yet there is a lot of information that can make

our understanding of the bible so much more. How do I find the "middle ground" that will help me to grow through the reading of Scripture?

PathwaystoGod.org has a wonderful introduction to Scripture (admittedly a bit long) that will help to give both a guide to selecting your

bible and a background to the Scripture itself. Please download, read and consider what it is you really hope for.

<https://www.pathwaystogod.org/resources/short-guide-reading-scriptures>

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Finding God in All Things

When folks study the bible they can run across various interpretation of the text. This is not unusual, we hear very different homilies each Sunday as the priest or deacon tries to apply the lessons of scripture to everyday life. The work of biblical scholarship has helped immensely to keep us "on track" and "in line" with scripture as a whole. Nevertheless, it is something which each of us will have to wrestle with, especially as we pass our faith onto our children.

At St. Ignatius of Loyola we have a particular perspective (hermeneutic) that we bring to our understanding of scripture. It is based on the spirituality of St. Ignatius and the Jesuits that says "God is with us. God is constantly caring for us, loving us, calling us to be God's children in our care for one another and for the the world." It is part of the way we read scripture, it is part of the way in which we pray, it is part of the way in which we preach. We hope that our spirituality becomes yours, a way of Finding God in All things.

Bible Reading vs. Bible Study

How much do I need to know to read scripture? Do I need to have a study bible? Do I need to have a course in the scriptures before I start?

The answer, of course, is that I don't need all these things to start. But as time goes on you might have your own questions and your own desire to understand more fully some particular passage or story. Folks may approach with a quote using it as a proof-text for their political or social viewpoint. Having a "critical" understanding of scripture, one that understands both the context and culture in which the word was spoken, helps us, at these times, to better understand God's inspiration.

But that doesn't mean that I cannot profit here and now

from my reading of scripture. We don't have to be experts for God to speak to us. We just need an open heart.

On the other hand, I have learned a lot from the general introductions to a book of the bible as well as the footnotes and citations often included. Did you ever hear of Hannah's prayer, 1 Samuel 2? Once you read it, well it opens up a new understanding of Mary's Magnificat, Luke 1:46-55. Such connections help us to understand just how much the "Old Testament" contributes to the writing of the "New Testament", gives us a sense of continuity of God's action in the world.

There is a place for Bible Study, to understand the culture and context, the translations, the author's

perspective and audience. Yet there is also a grace in our own reading, knowing that God really does speak to us individually through this living word.

Check out <https://www.biblegateway.com/> for various translations of scripture.

See <http://usccb.org/bible/index.cfm> for the New American Bible, Revised Edition for the translation used in our Catholic liturgies.

A wealth of resources on scripture (presentation/courses) may be found at the Mount Street Jesuit Centre, London

<https://www.pathwaystogod.org/org/mount-street-jesuit-centre/resources>