

FOCUS ON

"As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by his effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on the planet."

Kenneth Scott Latourette
Professor, Yale University

Revised
Summer 2022

JESUS

Introduction

The Bible is a gift from the God who both made us and desires to be in loving relationship with us. Learning who Jesus is in such a short study is a very difficult task! These lessons are an attempt to help disciples make disciples. Our prayer is that each reader would be brought face to face with Jesus and become as we are—radical, fired-up, crazy-in-love-with-Jesus disciples. While any human attempt is completely inadequate to save people, we hope that you will see past the pages of this study, past even the pages of the Bible, and see the God who set everything in motion. Focus on Jesus is dedicated to the Father who planned it all, to Jesus who gave it all, and to the Holy Spirit who fills the Earth with His presence. It is presented to learners and to learners who teach, that together we might win as many as possible. All glory be to God, forever and ever! Amen.

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How to Get the Most From this Study

The best thing about this study is that it places Jesus at the center of everything. FOJ uses Scripture—not our own words, but the word of God—to bring us to Jesus' feet. Each lesson is merely a collection of Biblical teachings and stories meant to cause you to lean in and listen to the voice of God. As you do that with one or a few other people, here are some tips on how to get the most out of this study:

1. Be relational.

"Knowledge puffs up while love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1). Seek to grow your love for Jesus, not just your knowledge about him. While you do so, build a relationship with the person you're on this journey with. Get to know one another as you get to know God.

2. Be open.

Keep an open mind about who God is and what he desires. Before we can learn, there's plenty to be unlearned. Perhaps Christ isn't what we've imagined him to be. Also, be open with one another. Honesty about who we are and what we've done is imperative to growth in our faith.

3. Be diligent.

The Bible isn't a sound bite. God isn't a content creator. If you want to know God, you're going to have to seek him out. "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all of your heart" (Jer. 29:13). Ask good questions, lean in, do the homework, and commit to being fully present and consistent in this study.

4. Be changed.

"His grace to me was not without effect" (1 Cor. 15:10). It is not enough to merely study or merely know, we are meant to be changed. The Word of God calls us to shed our old selves and become like Jesus. Let the Word change your heart and your life.

How to Lead this Study

We recommend for you to listen to the teaching guides available for each lesson at anyfocus.org/foj or on Spotify. Scan these codes to get started.



Getting to Know You

Your religious/spiritual beliefs and traditions

What religious/spiritual beliefs and traditions did you grow up with?

What religious/spiritual beliefs and traditions do you still observe now?

Have you ever questioned your own religious or spiritual beliefs? What did you conclude?

If your beliefs have changed, what happened in your life that made you rethink your beliefs and traditions?

Your thoughts about this study

Have you ever studied the Bible before? If so, how was your experience?

What do you hope to get out of this study?

What do you suppose this study could change about you and your life?

Getting to Know You (cont.)

For Christians

When did you give your life to Jesus and what did that look like?

As you reflect on your faith, would you consider yourself an active and committed Christian?

What is something you'd like to see grow/change about your relationship with the Lord?

Who are the people who have guided and challenged you in your faith?

For non-Christians

What are your thoughts on spiritual things?

What do you think of Jesus?

What do you think a Christian is, or what characterizes a Christian?

What has been your experience with Christians or Christianity?

Books of the Bible

66 Books
~40 Authors

GENESIS
EXODUS
LEVITICUS
NUMBERS
DEUTERONOMY

LAW

JOSHUA
JUDGES
RUTH
I SAMUEL
II SAMUEL
I KINGS
II KINGS
I CHRONICLES
II CHRONICLES
EZRA
NEHEMIAH
ESTHER

HISTORY

JOB
PSALMS
PROVERBS
ECCLESIASTES
SONG OF SOLOMON

POETRY

ISAIAH
JEREMIAH
LAMENTATIONS
EZEKIEL
DANIEL

MAJOR PROPHETS

HOSEA
JOEL
AMOS
OBADIAH
JONAH
MICAH
NAHUM
HABAKKUK
ZEPHANIAH
HAGGAI
ZECHARIAH
MALACHI

MINOR PROPHETS

MATTHEW
MARK
LUKE
JOHN
ACTS

GOSPELS

HISTORY

ROMANS
I CORINTHIANS
II CORINTHIANS
GALATIANS
EPHESIANS
PHILIPPIANS
COLOSSIANS
I THESSALONIANS
II THESSALONIANS
I TIMOTHY
II TIMOTHY
TITUS
PHILEMON

PAUL'S LETTERS

HEBREWS
JAMES
I PETER
II PETER
I JOHN
II JOHN
III JOHN
JUDE
REVELATION

GENERAL LETTERS

PROPHECY

OLD TESTAMENT

NEW TESTAMENT

Words of Life

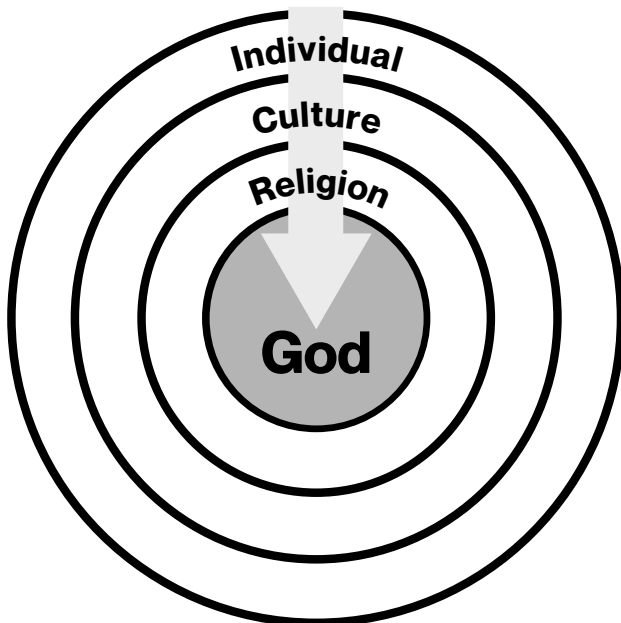
"For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty." – 2 Peter 1:16 NIV

1 | **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

2 | **Hebrews 4:12-13**

3 | **James 1:22-25**

4 | **John 5:39-40**



Further Study:

Choose a book of the Bible you are interested in reading and read it this week. Write down at least 3 questions that come up while you're reading it.

(Reference page 29 for average reading times for every book and other useful tips.)

What's Jesus Like?

"The Son is the image of the invisible God." – The Apostle Paul (Colossians 1:15)

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." – Luke 19:10

"We cannot deduce anything about Jesus from what we think we know about God; we must now deduce everything about God from what we do know about Jesus." – Brennan Manning

1 | **Luke 2:41-52**

2 | **Mark 1:40-45**

3 | **Mark 11:15-17**

4 | **John 8:2-11**

5 | **John 13:1-15**

6

Philippians 2:5 says, "Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." How would following Jesus by imitating His mindset change your life? What excuses do you make for not being like Him?

Further Study:

Choose one of the 4 gospels to read this week, and write down three things that really stand out to you about Jesus.

Life in the Body

"I pray also for those who will believe in me...that all of them may be one...so that the world may believe that you have sent me." – Jesus (John 17:20-21)

1 | **Acts 2:42-47**

2 | **Romans 12:4-8**

3 | **Hebrews 10:24-25**

4 | **Ephesians 4:2-3**

5 | **Matthew 18:15-17**

6 | **Acts 1:6-8**

Further Study:

How do you think the instructions above compare to the modern idea of "church?"

Further Study

The letters in the New Testament give us a lot of insight into what Christian community is supposed to look like. This week, read Romans 12-15. To go even further, read the first part of Romans (1-11).

What surprises you most about the picture Paul paints of what Christian life and community ought to look like?

What do you find most difficult or challenging? What questions emerge?

Read the "one another" passages on the next page and assess yourself according to the passages. (Write 1-3 that stand out.)

"One Another" Passages

Mark 9:50	"...Be at peace with each other"
John 13:14	"...Wash one another's feet"
John 13:34	"...Love one another"
Romans 12:10	"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love..."
Romans 12:10	"...Honor one another above yourselves"
Romans 12:16	"Live in harmony with one another..."
Romans 15:7	"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you..."
Romans 15:14	"...Instruct one another"
Romans 16:16	"Greet one another with a holy kiss..."
1 Corinthians 12:25	"...Have equal concern for each other"
Galatians 5:13	"...Serve one another in love"
Galatians 6:2	"Carry each other's burdens..."
Ephesians 4:2	"...Be patient, bearing with one another in love"
Ephesians 4:32	"Be kind and compassionate to one another..."
Ephesians 5:19	"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs"
Ephesians 5:21	"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ"
Colossians 3:16	"...Teach and admonish one another with all wisdom"
1 Thessalonians 3:12	"...Make your love increase and overflow for each other"
1 Thessalonians 4:18	"...Encourage each other..."
1 Thessalonians 5:11	"...Build each other up..."
Hebrews 3:13	"Encourage one another daily..."
Hebrews 10:24	"...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds"
Hebrews 10:25	"Let us not give up meeting together..."
James 5:16	"Confess your sins to each other..."
James 5:16	"...Pray for each other"
1 Peter 1:22	"...Love one another deeply, from the heart"
1 Peter 3:8	"...Live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble."
1 Peter 4:9	"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling"
1 Peter 4:10	"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others..."

Discipleship

"The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." – Acts 11:26

Disciple = **Mathetes** (Gr) = "a learner; one who follows one's teachings" (Vine's)

1 | **Matthew 9:9-13**

2 | **Luke 9:22-26**

3 | **John 8:31-32**

4 | **John 13:34-35**

5 | **John 15:5-8**

6 | **Luke 14:25-33**

Further Study:

Based on these scriptures, are you living as a disciple?
If so, how is that demonstrated in your life?
If not, what is your response to today's teaching?

Further Study

"We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." – 1 John 2:3-6

What do you think it would look like for you to live as Jesus did?

Make a list of everything that you value—relationships, possessions, attitudes, dreams, plans, honors, sins, careers, degrees, etc. Which of these would be hardest for you to give up for Christ? How could you see Him asking you to do so?

"Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth which has a place for the Fatherhood of God, but omits Christ as the living Son."

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Sin

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." – Paul (Romans 3:23)

Sin = **Hamartia** (Greek) = "to miss the mark" (Vine's)

1 | **Mark 7:21-23**

2 | **Galatians 5:13-6:2**

3

Looking back over the last two scriptures, which of these sins have most affected your life? Which are most tempting to you?

4 | **James 4:17**

5 | **Zechariah 7:8-12**

6 | **James 1:13-15**

Further Study:

The questions on the following page are designed to help you take stock of the impact sin has had on your life, past and present. Consider these things and record your answers in a journal or on a separate sheet of paper.

Further Study

- 1. Read Mark 7:21-23, Galatians 5:19-21, and Romans 1:29-31.
How have these been present in your life?
Be prepared to share a few of these.**
- 2. Read Jeremiah 2:13. Sin is usually the result of us trying to meet healthy wants and needs in unhealthy ways. What legitimate needs are you trying to meet through sin?**
- 3. Review 1 Corinthians 4:4. Knowing that you can't always trust your feelings, is there anything in your life that you aren't sure whether it's sinful or not?**
- 4. Whom have you hurt because of your sin? (yourself, God, friends, family, roommates, others—be specific) How has each been hurt?**
- 5 In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul says that true repentance includes a desire to see justice done and an eagerness to clear things up (2 Corinthians 7:11). What steps do you need to take to make things right? (Return stolen items, replace lies with truth, ask forgiveness, etc.)**
- 6. Reflect on the following quote:**

"The Bible presents sin by way of major concepts, principally lawlessness and faithlessness, expressed in an array of images: sin is the missing of a target, a wandering from the path, a straying from the fold. Sin is a hard heart and a stiff neck. Sin is blindness and deafness. It is both the overstepping of a line and the failure to reach it--both transgression and shortcoming. Sin is a beast crouching at the door. In sin, people attack or evade or neglect their divine calling. These and other images suggest deviance: even when it is familiar, sin is never normal. Sin is disruption of created harmony and then resistance to to divine restoration of that harmony. Above all, sin disrupts and resists the vital human relation to God... Sinful life, as Geoffrey Bromily observes, is a partly depressing, partly ludicrous caricature of genuine human life."

—Cornelius Platinga Jr., Not the Way It's Supposed to Be

Grace

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." – Romans 6:23

Grace = **Charis** (Greek): "undeserved favor or mercy"

1 | **John 1:14-17**

2 | **Ephesians 2:4-10**

3 | **Romans 8:1-2**

4 | **Titus 2:11-14**

5 | **Luke 15:11-32**

6

Do you tend to think of God as being more like the father or the brother in the story from Luke 15? Which of the two is more like you?

Further Study:

How do you feel about the idea of God forgiving you? Is his forgiveness something you're willing to accept? Is there anyone, yourself included, whom you are unwilling to forgive? If so, who and why?

Read Luke 7:36-50. Now read it again slowly, imagining yourself as one of the people in the story. What do you see, hear, feel, experience? Talk to Jesus about what you imagined.

Jesus' Hard Teachings

"I have no idea how the fans of Christianity Lite reconcile their approach to religion with the teachings of Jesus, or how they become comfortable ignoring what He said." – John MacArthur, Hard to Believe

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" – Jesus (Luke 6:46)

1 | **Matthew 25:31-46**

2 | **Matthew 18:21-35**

3 | **Luke 6:35-36**

4 | **Matthew 7:13-27**

5 | **John 14:6-10**

6

Which of these teachings is the hardest for you to accept? Why?

Further Study:

Matthew 5-7 is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. Read it this week.

Which parts are the most challenging to you?

Take the time to copy those passages in your own handwriting.

Faith, Love, & Obedience

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." – Galatians 5:6

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." – 1 John 4:8

1 | Hebrews 11: 1, 6

2 | Romans 1:17

3 | James 2:14-17

4 | John 14:23-24

5 | 1 John 4:19-21

6

Is there someone in your life that's hard for you to love? What about groups of people? (Think about other races, political parties, people who do evil, etc.)

Further Study:

Based on the scriptures we just read, what do you think the Bible means when it says, "saved by faith?"

Further Study

Faith or Trust = **Pistis** (Greek) = "a firm conviction" (Vine's)

Do you trust God? How do you see that in your life?

**"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."
– 1 Cor 13:4-7**

Go through the list above with God, reflecting on each quality of love.

**Do you love people like that? Which qualities of love are the hardest for you?
Who are the hardest people for you to love?
Talk to God about all of this.**

Rebirth, Repentance, & Baptism

*"When you were dead in your sins...God made you alive with Christ.
He forgave us all our sins" – Colossians 2:13*

1 | **John 3:3-7**

2 | **Titus 3:3-8**

3 | **Acts 2:36-41**

4 | **2 Corinthians 7:8-11**

5 | **Galatians 3:26-27**

6 | **Romans 6:1-4**

Further Study:

Describe in God's own words the rebirth Jesus talked about.

Have you been reborn as the Bible describes it? If not, are you ready?

Further Study

Using only phrases from the following scriptures, write out what the Bible teaches about repentance.

- 2 Corinthians 7:8-11
- 1 Peter 3:10-11
- 2 Timothy 2:25-26
- Luke 13:3-5
- 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10
- James 4:7-10
- Isaiah 55:6-7
- Acts 2:36-40

Using only phrases from the following scriptures, write out what the Bible teaches about baptism.

- Acts 2:36-40
- 1 Peter 3:21
- Romans 6:3-11
- Matthew 28:18-20
- John 3:1-7
- Galatians 3:26-27
- Ephesians 4:4-5
- Mark 16:16
- Colossians 2:9-12
- Acts 22:16
- Titus 3:4-7
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Also consider these examples of conversion in Acts: 2:36-42, 8:26-39, 9:1-19, 10:44-48, 16:13-15, 16:25-34, 18:7-8, 19:1-7. Do any of these Biblical experiences look like your experience?

"It is His will that all who have believed be baptized for the remission of sins. Hence those who have thought that baptism is nothing else than the badge and mark [or symbol] by which we profess our religion before men, in the same way as soldiers attest their profession by bearing the insignia of their commander, have not attended to what was the principle thing in baptism; and this is, that we are to receive it in connection with the promise: 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.'" – John Calvin

Sent Into the World

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." – Mark 16:15

"A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for." – William Shedd

1 | **Matthew 28:18-20**

2 | **John 17:13-18**

3 | **1 Peter 2:9-12**

4 | **2 Corinthians 5:14-20**

5 | **Romans 8:14-17**

6

Complete the
"Sent Into the World"
worksheet on the
next three pages.

Question:

Considering everything you have learned through this study, what will your ministry look like when you go out into the world to make disciples?

Further Study

As this study comes to a close, it's imperative that you allow God to turn your focus outward and begin seeking those He wants to impact through you.

Who are some people in your life that you believe may not be right with Christ? What specific prayers can you begin praying for them?

List the top four or five most significant needs you see in your peers.

What are the three or four most important personal contributions you can bring to meeting those needs?

"When you are on your death bed, you will be asking only two questions: Who did I love? Who loved me? You won't be thinking about your GPA, MBA, IRA, or BMW. You will be overwhelmed by the depth (or lack of depth!) of relationships you formed during your brief stay on this planet."

– Steve Shadrach, The Fuel and the Flame

"I wonder if it might be true that if we are not engaged in spiritual friendship, there are things we can never learn as disciples—no matter how many Bible studies we join, classes and courses we complete, sermons we take notes on, verses we memorize, doctrines we affirm. Might spiritual friendship be an essential dimension of our own training as disciples, an experience we need as much as others do? And further, might it be fair to say we cannot really call ourselves disciples if we are not following Jesus' and Peter's example of being 'friends of sinners' —spiritual friends who love, accept, learn with, and teach those who are missed by God, precious to God?"

– Brian McLaren, More Ready Than You Realize

Sent Into the World - Further Study (cont.)

Consider Matthew 13:44-46. Was this your response to the best news?

What have you "sold" for the Kingdom?

What do you need to "sell"?

The primary difference between Jesus and any other "good" person was his purpose. Are you living your life on purpose? How does that line up with His? How is that demonstrated in your life?

"The Master said that he who 'does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me' (Matthew 10:38). Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German martyr, caught the meaning of this when he wrote, 'When Jesus calls a man, he bids him come and die.' We have no reason or right to choose another way than the way God chose in Jesus Christ. The Cross is both a symbol of our salvation and the pattern of our lives. When our dogmatic beliefs and moral principles do not realize themselves in discipleship, then our holiness is an illusion."

– Brennan Manning, The Signature of Jesus

Sent Into the World - Further Study (cont.)

In light of this entire study, take some time to dream with God. What do you want to accomplish in your short time here? Prayerfully consider this, and use the space below to set 20 spiritual goals for your life.

We leave you now with some of Jesus' words to his disciples:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." – Acts 1:8

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." – Matthew 28:18-20

What's Next?

Each of these can be done individually or with a partner:

1. Read to discover the main Old Testament story from start to finish, skimming over lists, rules, genealogies, etc (you can go back later and study these). The basic order is Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus 8-10, Numbers, Deuteronomy 30-34, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Ezra, and Nehemiah.
2. Read a gospel followed by a commentary of the same gospel.
3. Write your own annotated bibliography of each book of the New Testament (an annotated bibliography provides a concise summary of each source and some assessment of its value or relevance). Go a step further and identify a theme verse for each book.
4. While reading through John and Acts, write out all of the scriptures that talk about the Holy Spirit. Reflect on His role in the church, your life, and your ministry.
5. In one place, keep an ongoing list of spiritual questions that you have for God. Seek answers in Scripture, in prayer, and from other people. Keep this list going and be patient! Discipleship is a lifelong endeavor.
6. Memorize the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-10). This has been called the ethical core of Jesus' teachings.
7. Think of a topic that challenges you (for example: women in ministry, spiritual gifts, baptism, abortion, Christians in the military, etc.) and develop arguments for two (or more) opposing sides with scriptural support.
8. Pray through the Lord's Prayer (found in Matt 6:9-13) daily for a week (or more), expanding each line into your own words and applying it to your own life.
9. Read a chapter in Proverbs and pray for wisdom every day for a month (there are 31 chapters in Proverbs). As you encounter wisdom that you need to hold on to, capture it in writing.
10. There are a number of different types of psalms found in the book of Psalms. Use the Internet to identify a praise psalm and a lament psalm and read both. Then write your own psalm. Feel free to lament before God or rejoice. Note that most Psalms of lament end with rejoicing in who God is.

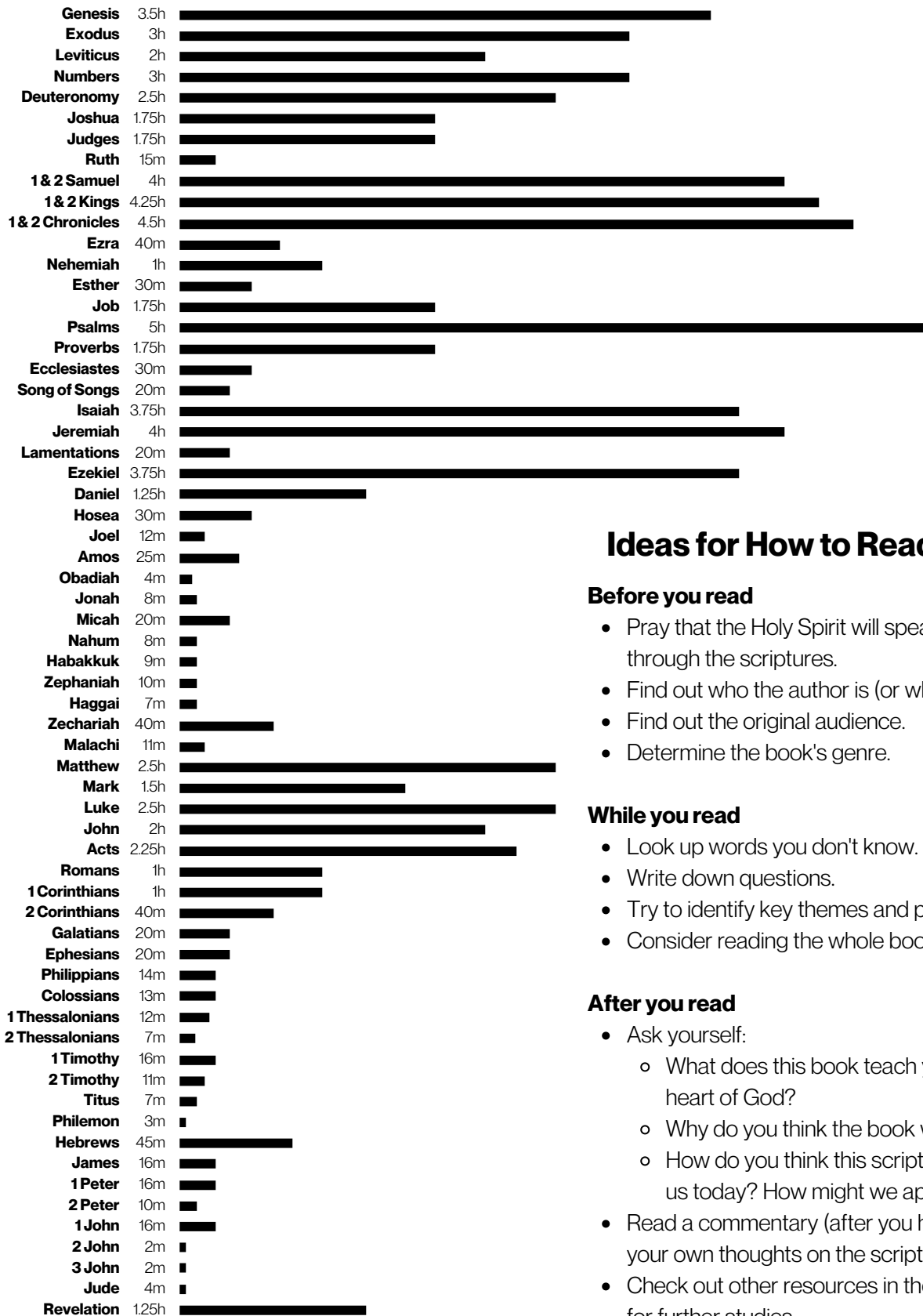
Other Resources

There are many great resources that will help you grow in your faith and deepen your understanding of the scripture. Here are a few we recommend as good places to start. (These resources are chosen to be challenging for college students. Don't expect high school level material!)

1. **Regentaudio.com.** Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, is a transdenominational graduate school of Christian studies. They offer mp3 recordings of many of their for-credit courses for a fraction of the cost of tuition through their bookstore's website. Two great classes to start with would be "Old Testament Foundations" by Iain Provan and "New Testament Foundations" by Rikk Watts.
2. **NIVAC series.** NIV Application Commentaries are available for almost every book of the Bible. They strike a great balance between thoughtful scholarship to help you understand the original text and helping you apply the text to today. If you don't have a specific book in mind to study, Mark by David Garland is an excellent place to start.
4. **How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth and How to Read the Bible Book by Book by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.** These two companion books are great tools for learning how to better read and understand scripture on your own.
5. **So, You Want to Be Like Christ? by Charles Swindoll.** If you want to deepen your personal walk with God and develop spiritual disciplines, this book is our recommended place to start.
6. **Vine's Expository Dictionary.** Use this resource to look up words from scripture. It will identify the original Greek or Hebrew words used and define them. The English translation doesn't always capture the nuances of the original text, and this resource can take your understanding a step further. This resource is available for free online. Just search for it.
7. **Counterpoints and Spectrum Multiview book series** (examples: Women in Ministry: Four Views, Three Views on Creation and Evolution). If you want to explore a controversial doctrine, these series are great places to start. Each book has multiple viewpoints put forth by multiple authors who hold those views. Then each author gets the chance to respond to each of the others. This is a great way to expose yourself to the various issues that surround the debate and give you ideas for further study.

Notes

Average Reading Time



Ideas for How to Read a Book

Before you read

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to you through the scriptures.
- Find out who the author is (or who it likely is).
- Find out the original audience.
- Determine the book's genre.

While you read

- Look up words you don't know.
- Write down questions.
- Try to identify key themes and passages.
- Consider reading the whole book in one sitting.

After you read

- Ask yourself:
 - What does this book teach you about the heart of God?
 - Why do you think the book was written?
 - How do you think this scripture speaks to us today? How might we apply it today?
- Read a commentary (after you have formed your own thoughts on the scripture).
- Check out other resources in the back of FOJ for further studies.

