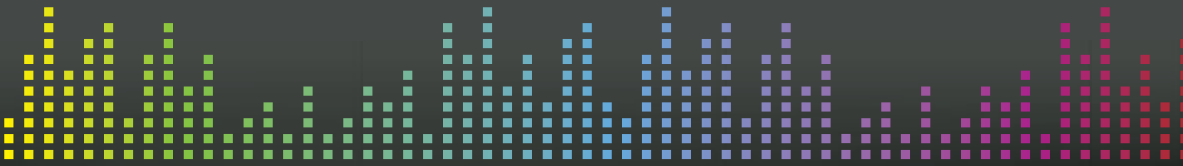


WORKBOOK

READING *the* BIBLE ALoud



HOW TO READ GOD'S WORD WITH
EXPRESSION, CLARITY *and* CONVICTION

The public reading of Scripture is a pretty standard part of most church services—or at least it *should* be, according to 1 Timothy 4:13.

But ‘pretty standard’ doesn’t mean ordinary or insignificant. Indeed, the apostle Paul thinks it is *so important* that he urges Timothy to be “devoted” to the task.

What about your church?

If a visitor came to your church would they conclude that you take the Bible readings pretty seriously? Or would they perhaps walk in and notice someone frantically scanning the Bible passage for the first time just before church starts, desperately hoping there is no reference to Onesiphorus or Mephibosheth or the region of Shittim?

In this short course, we’ll think through the *why* and *how* of communicating God’s word clearly and meaningfully for the benefit of those to whom you are reading. We’ll see what it looks like, in other words, to be devoted to the public reading of Scripture in a practical and achievable way.

Course materials: workbook for each participant and video material.



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HOW TO READ GOD'S WORD WITH
EXPRESSION, CLARITY AND CONVICTION

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and JASON PERINI



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SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

Reading the Bible Aloud

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INTRODUCTION

W elcome to the *Reading the Bible Aloud* course. We're delighted that you have committed some time toward the goal of being a better communicator of God's word when you walk up the front to read it out aloud.

One of the things we've grappled with as we've been developing this course is how high to set the bar. How much preparation should we ask you to do before you step up to read? Just how well do you need to understand the passage of Scripture you are reading? How much practice do we expect you to put in?

On the one hand, we want to encourage you to take the ministry of reading the Bible to others seriously. On the other hand, we don't want it to seem like you need to spend days preparing—because, to be honest, not many are going to put their name down for the Bible reading roster if that is the expectation.

In the end, how much you prepare is largely up to you. On the whole though, at least in our own experience, we suspect many should be taking the task just a little bit more seriously than they seem to. Reading the passage quickly for the first time just before church starts is simply not adequate.

But with just a modest amount of preparation—the sort of preparation we are going to outline in this course—we think the quality and effectiveness of the Bible readings in our churches and other fellowships can be greatly improved, to the glory of God. That is certainly our prayer.

So we hope you enjoy the course and that it gives you extra confidence and skills that will make Bible reading a better experience not only for you, but also for the people you are reading to.

Jason Perini

Ian Carmichael

SESSION 1

In this first session, we're going to think about the way we approach the task of reading the Bible aloud. You might think this session is not very practical compared with the tips and techniques we will come to in session 2, and so be tempted to skip over it—but this would be a mistake. As we will see, thinking about how we approach God's word is not only extremely important, but also immensely practical.



Watch: Approaching the Bible (5:40)

My notes:

[Taking notes as you watch a video helps you to concentrate on what is being said and remember it later.]

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. (1 Tim 4:13)

What is the Bible?

How do we prepare to read the Bible aloud?



Think and discuss

For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe...

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. (1 Tim 4:10, 13)

1. If a visitor came into your church each week for a few months, what value would they conclude your church places on the public reading of Scripture?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
Unimportant *Extremely important*

2. Rate the value you personally put on the public reading of Scripture both *in theory* (t) and *in practice* (p). Is there a difference between your two ratings? If so, why?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7
Unimportant *Extremely important*

pages omitted from sample files



Exercise: Preparing to read

To read the Bible to others, we need to work out what we are reading. We need to get a handle on the words, the scene, and the context. We need to orient ourselves to it.

Below are three different passages of Scripture. Choose one of the passages, read it, and then answer the orientation questions in the table as best you can. If your group is big enough, break into three smaller groups and do a passage each. Then—if time permits—come back together and quickly share your answers.

NB. *Write down* your answers, because you will come back to them in the next session of the course.

Psalm 130

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!

² O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive

to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

³ If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
that you may be feared.

⁵ I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in his word I hope;

⁶ my soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

⁷ O Israel, hope in the LORD!
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.

⁸ And he will redeem Israel
from all his iniquities.

What kind of writing is it?	Hebrew wisdom literature and poetry ²
<i>Comprehension:</i>	
List any words you don't understand and try to find out what they mean.	
<i>Context questions for this genre:</i>	
Are there any clues about the circumstances in which the passage was written?	
What has happened so far?	
<i>Observation questions for this genre:</i>	
Are there repetitions or multiple instances of similar ideas? Do these repetitions make a particular point, or point to the structure of the passage?	
What images or metaphors does the author use? What do those metaphors indicate about God or the other people in the text? What might they indicate about modern readers?	

2 You will find standard context and observation questions for each biblical genre in appendix 2.

What is the tone of the passage? What emotions is the author arousing?	
What is the main point (or points)?	
What surprises are there?	

Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

pages omitted from sample files



SESSION 2

In session 1 we spent some time thinking about the importance of God's word, and of approaching it with delight and humility. We also looked at the need to orient ourselves to the passage of Scripture we are reading aloud.

In this session, we will look at some more keys to good Bible reading:

- understanding the **context** in which we are reading
- considering the way we **communicate** what we are reading
- things we can do to increase our **confidence** when we read.



Watch: Context (3:20)

My notes:

A good reading:

-
-
-

Your listeners

Your environment

The goal



Think and discuss

Well, we all know how the story goes. It's come to that point in the church gathering where someone announces from up the front: "And now it's time for our Bible reading." And it's you. You're up. You're the reader.

1. How do you feel when that moment comes? Share your answer with the group.
 - Tired—I didn't sleep last night because of anxiety over this moment.
 - I wish I wasn't on the roster!
 - A little nervous.
 - Okay, but feeling the pressure.
 - It's fine.
 - I love doing this.

2. What things in your church context might regularly interfere with the effectiveness of the public reading of Scripture? We've listed some common ones, but try to think of others.

- PA system problems (including microphone position)
- hot and stuffy room (or cold room)
- people in the room doing something distracting (including children)
- reader starts to read before people find the passage
- reading is too fast or too slow
- what took place just before the reading
- what the reader is wearing (or not wearing!)
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3. What could you do as a group or individually to rectify some of those issues?



Watch: Communicate (16:05)

My notes:

[This video is longer than the other videos in this course. Taking notes will help you stay focused on what's being said.]

The goal

Tone

Words

- *key words*
- *tricky words*
- *joining or linking words (conjunctions)*
- *let the words do the work*

Punctuation

- *full stops*
- *commas*
- *question marks*

Pauses

Breathing



Exercise: Practising what you've learned

It's time to give all that you've learned a go. Following are the three Bible passages that we included in session 1, but this time we've printed them in double spacing and a nice big font.

Whichever passage you looked at in session 1, that is the passage you will now prepare for reading, and then read aloud (not to the whole group; just by yourself).

pages omitted from sample files



APPENDIX 4: TIPS FOR RUNNING THIS COURSE

This training course is designed to run over two sessions. Depending on how freely the discussions flow in your training group, you should be able to run each session in less than 1½ hours.

You could therefore conduct each session on separate evenings, or perhaps run both sessions back to back on, say, a Saturday morning, with a short morning tea break between sessions. However, please note that there is some suggested ‘homework’ between sessions 1 and 2 (see the end of session 1). So if you are running the sessions back to back, you might like to ask people to read appendix 1 as *preparation* for the course (rather than as homework for session 2), and ask them to do the ‘think and pray’ part for a few minutes before or during the break between sessions.

Although the course itself is just two sessions, you will see that at the end of session 2 there are suggestions for following up the two sessions—one of which is to run a *third* group session in which course participants practise what they have learned.

Please also note that in session 2:

- The second video is significantly longer than the other video segments. It contains many practical tips about reading as well as some good and bad examples that illustrate most of these tips.
- The exercise involves group members splitting off on their own to prepare and practise one of the Bible readings from session 1, so you

will need some space for this. You may have the luxury of a separate room for each person, or you could send people outside to find a quiet spot (depending on where you're meeting and what the weather is like). If you all need to stay in the same room, encourage people to ignore each other and just focus on their own reading. You might like to put on some music so that the first person to break the silence doesn't feel too awkward.

- Photocopying page 26 for people will make it easier for them to refer to it as they work through the steps.

Outline of each session with timing

Session 1

Activity	Suggested timing (min)	Your timing
Watch: Approaching the Bible	5:40	5:40
Think and discuss	25:00	
Watch: The spotlight is on God's word	2:45	2:45
Think and discuss	15:00	
Watch: Read what you are reading	2:55	2:55
Exercise: Preparing to read	25:00	

Session 2

Activity	Suggested timing (min)	Your timing
Watch: Context	3:20	3:20
Think and discuss	10:00	
Watch: Communicate	16:05	16:05
Exercise: Practising what you've learned	25:00	
Watch: Confidence	3:05	3:05
Pray	10:00	