

The
Early Days
Booklet

Roger Stone

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A quick guide on how to read your Bible

Okay, so maybe looking at a Bible is new to you? You'll need a little help in finding your way around one then. After all, there's nothing like covering the basics first!



When you open your Bible and look at the Contents page, you will find there is an Old Testament and a New Testament. In the Old Testament are all the events that happened before Jesus came down to earth from Heaven. The New Testament is all about the events that happened after Jesus came to earth as a baby and further on too. Each Testament is made up of 'books'. When you read your Bible, if you don't know where to find a 'book' in the Bible, look in the Contents and you will find out.

In churches, the usual practice is for you to be asked to look for a reference in the Bible. This might be said like this: "Find John, chapter 10, verse 14 in your Bible." Or it may be written down to look like this: John.10:14; the 10 being the chapter (Ch) and the 14 being the verse (v).

John.10:14 is in the New Testament but open your Bible and see if you can find it for yourself. When you find the book of John, you then need to go through the book until you find Chapter 10. Then you go down the chapter until you find verse 14. John.10:14 in the New International Bible (NIV) says this: "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me." This is Jesus speaking to us and to His disciples.

In this booklet, you will find several Bible references. With practise you will become more familiar with finding those verses. Don't give up! Those verses will become like treasure to you. We pray that His Word will be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. God bless you!

With blessings

Roger and Susan

The Bible quotes in this booklet are taken from the New International Version (NIV)

Day One

When I became a Christian, all those years ago, I didn't know very much and I knew I needed help. My workmates and family would ask me lots of questions. "What has happened to you?" "Why do you go to church?" I looked for guidance that would help me in my new-found faith.

God provided that guidance in an unexpected way. I began a Scripture memory course that gave me two things at the same time. Firstly, by reading Scripture I discovered a lot of information. Secondly, by memorizing a verse at a time, I had answers to most of the questions I was often asked.

Today I would like to share how that works. Firstly, I will describe a method for Scripture memory. Secondly, I will show how to tailor that method to one subject. In this case, preparing for when people ask you about your faith. We call this personal evangelism.

Below are two pictures. One is the back and the other is the front, of what is called a 'flash card'. The front of the card has a verse written on it. The back of the card has the Bible reference for that verse written on it. First remember the reference, then turn the card over and remember the verse. Keep doing this until you can remember both sides without looking.

For all have sinned
and
fall short of the
glory of God,



Romans.3:23

Now, make a flash card for each of the following verses. Each of these verses concerns answering people with wisdom. If you don't have card, then use pieces of paper. Practise these until you can remember them. You will find this easier as you persevere and go along. When you feel you know them, make more cards for yourself from your Bible.

Here is the list: Romans.3:23; Colossians.4:2; Colossians.4:6; 1 Peter.3:15; Romans.6:2; James.1:25; Romans.8:14.



Day Two

Within a short time of becoming a Christian, I began to see that my life was not really my own. Some folks may think that sounds funny. Even so, I discovered that God has saved me, not only because He loves me but, for a purpose. The ongoing discovery of that purpose is a life-long adventure for all Christians.

We can never say we have finished but there are things we can do now. In the past my life was full of self-indulgence. The life of a disciple of Christ follows a pattern of self-denial. In the past I couldn't care less about other folks. The life of a disciple of Christ becomes sensitive to conscience.

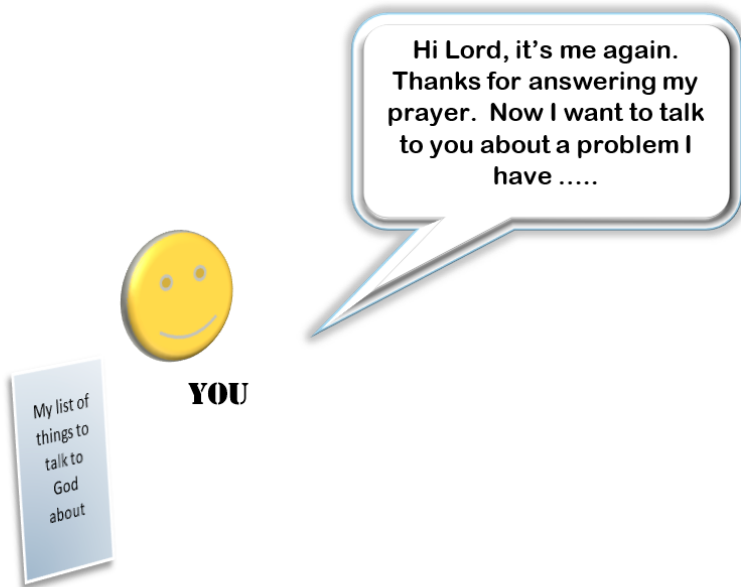
If you think these things are hard at first, don't worry. It's simple really, here's an example. God doesn't judge you now, so you won't stand in judgement of other folks in the church you belong to either (Romans.14:4).

Today I would like you to look at the bullet points below. You'll see some examples of changes taking place in your life already. Alongside these, you will see some Scriptures that confirm God has His hand on your life as you experience these changes yourself. With your Bible open, take a look and see what the Lord confirms to you now:

- Once you loved only yourself. Now you love the Lord because you are known to Him and He loved you first (1 Corinthians.8:3; 1 John.3:24; 1 John.4:10).
- Once you were hurt, embittered and sinful. Now this love of God in you touches other folks like yourself (John.13:35; 1 Corinthians.9:19-23; 1 Corinthians Ch.13).
- Once you didn't know how to talk to the Lord. Now you are learning to converse with Him as His friend (John.15:14-16; Ephesians.1:15-16; Ephesians.6:18; Philippians.4:6-7).
- Once you didn't know one end of a Bible from the other. Now you love His Word and are enjoying the discovery of His will (Galatians.5:19-26; 1 Corinthians.15:3-4; Revelation.3:6-8).

- Once you were full of cursing and swearing, the language of Hell! Now you are full of praise and thanksgiving because Christ in you brings joy (Proverbs.4:20-24; Romans.1:21-22; Hebrews.13:15).
- Once you only served the purposes of this world and had respect for no one. Now you are a disciple of the Most High God. You are highly honoured and esteemed (Isaiah.35:8; 1 Corinthians.9:19-23; 2 Corinthians.5:19-21).

Did that speak to you? Share it with someone! Now be encouraged to commit your way to Him and never stop exploring His purpose for your life. I'm sure that you will soon make some great discoveries for yourself.



"I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live."

Psalm.116:1-2 NIV

Day Three

By now it's possible that you have got used to the excitement that new Christians experience. At this point your zeal can start to wane. Unfortunately, this is not always helped by folks who have been in Christ for a long time already! Perhaps they've forgotten what it is to go on with the Lord? Perhaps they've been hardened by struggles in their life? Or, maybe they've fallen to some temptation and become disillusioned?

Today that's what I want to look at, temptation. Whatever you do, try not to set your responses by what you see in other folks unless, they are a model which resembles the example of Scripture.

Temptation is usually a twin-pronged fork. You will either be tempted by thoughts which plague you from the past. Or, you will be offered temptation to sin in the future. Each of these has power to reduce you to discouragement if you are not ready.

In some cases there have been a few folks who were so disillusioned that they fell away and gave up. This tragedy is exactly what Satan has designed for God's people as soon as they come to Christ (Matthew.13:4). Today I would like to look at ways in which a child of God is to stand firm and grow in grace, despite any temptation.

- First put your armour on and you are ready for past and present (Romans.13:14; Ephesians.6:10-20). Don't think that you can stand by someone else's faith or, that these distractions will pass over you. That would be just like going around with nothing on! Be self-controlled and alert so you can pray (1 Peter.4:7). Fan into flame the gift of God in you (2 Timothy.1:6-7). Now let's work our way through the next few steps.
- Thoughts which plague us from the past will most probably remind us of some unworthiness or, remind us of folks who hurt us and we have not forgiven. When these thoughts come upon us, we need to know how to respond like a warrior in a battle. The only thing is, our weapons are not the weapons of this world (2 Corinthians.10:3-5).
- Remember this, God's perspective of you is given in Scripture (Ephesians.5:18-20; 1 Peter.1:3-9; 1 Peter.2:9-10)! Therefore we speak to ourselves with those words. I know this sounds odd at first, speaking to yourself. Yet Scripture speaks powerfully against those negative thoughts

so, please take this on board. You can add these verses to your Scripture memory exercises.

- Now let's come to the folks we may not have forgiven yet, this is important (Matthew.18:23-35)! Among those are people and incidents we have usually forgotten for now. Lying buried somewhere in the past, the devil will rake these up like weeds and then present them to our thoughts, tormenting us.
- How do we answer? Sit down and pray, asking the Lord to reveal all those we have not consciously forgiven, including ourselves. Don't just rack your brains, ask the Holy Spirit to search you (Psalm.139:23-24). Write a list of these things and then with your hands laid upon the paper pray, forgiving each person as you go through the list. Carefully and in a safe place, either burn the list or, tear it to shreds. In this way, there is no longer ANY spiritual connection between you and those hurtful events of the past.

Does that feel better now? If your answer is yes, then it's still exciting to be a child of God, isn't it?



YOU



I stand
firm on
the Rock
which is
Christ

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.”

Ephesians.6:10-11 NIV

Day Four

If there is a subject that people can get hot under the collar about, it's baptism! When I told my own father I was going to be baptised and invited him to the service he became very irate, "You were done when you were a baby!" I replied, "How can a baby have faith in Christ?" He wouldn't come to the service and so I carried on under the direction of the Holy Spirit that I must choose Him first (1 Corinthians.2:14-15).

Some folks just say, "What are you doing that for, there's no need." Some folks rely on their infant baptism and blank their mind to what the Bible says about the subject. Some folks are just too frightened! Afraid of what they will look like or, what other people might think. Some folks are just too proud and some folks are a mixture of the sum of these (Matthew.3:9; Luke.7:29-30).

The question I always ask is this, "Is there anyone in the Bible who used a saucer to baptise people with?" Have a look for yourself but you will find the answer is no. My next questions are, "In that case why should we bother with a saucer?" "When there is a baptistery or a swimming pool available why mess with a saucer dripping all over the place?" "Why put up with the minimum when you can have the fullness?" "If there is water, why can't I be baptised?" (Acts.8:36-38).

Of course, baptism does require that you believe with all your heart in the Lord Jesus Christ. You can then go through immersion in water under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and by obedience to the Scriptures. Either way, you will have stepped into the will of God for your life as it is given in the Bible (Acts.2:41).

Do you think this could be for you now (Acts.10:47)? It's called believers baptism. Here are some bullet points for you to work through and then you must decide for yourself:

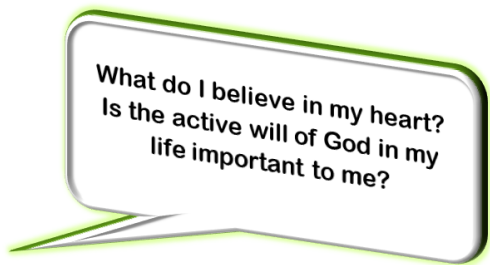
- Look up all the references in your New Testament that mention baptism. Now, never mind what other people think, what do you make of it from that?
- Sit down and pray, asking the Lord if He is calling you to be baptised.
- If you believe He is, then talk this through with the leadership of your church. There is usually a course they can take you through to prepare you first.

- A service of baptism for a Christian has a very powerful impact on other folks. Is this a statement you want to make? If so, who would you invite to the service?
- When a Christian is baptised, they have crossed a line. From belonging to the world, to an open statement that they belong to Christ. A statement that says, they have crossed over from death to life. Are you content with this?
- By being baptised, you put your signature to a covenant which God has made. Do you understand that this is a forever thing (Romans.11:29; Hebrews.10:38-39)?

Are you ready? Or, could you share these things with someone you know? If you do go through the waters, I would love to be there myself to encourage you. Stay blessed.



YOU



“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

Matthew.3:11 NIV

Day Five

Has it ever occurred to you that you may not have the authority to do something or, to enter an important place? That's fine if it means you would be committing an offence. However, if we have a right to do that thing and be in those places, then it may be a lack of confidence that makes us hesitate. How far can I go? What can I do and what can't I do? Where does my authority come from? Don't worry, these are questions which Christians often ask.

Too many folks give up at this point and hand the responsibility to the priest or, the pastor. Whilst it's right to respect church leadership, it was never God's intention that you should just become a statue in a church (Matthew.23:9; 1 Peter.2:9).

Even so unless we are sure of our answers, we can get tied up in self-doubt (Hebrews.11:1). To faith we must add knowledge and all other means of grace, if we are to get the right balance (2 Peter.1:5-9). The reality is, we have no authority of our own. We are saved by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. So, our authority is in Him!

Today I want to look at the authority Christians do have, through the Holy name of Jesus Christ (Hebrews.4:15-16; Hebrews.10:19-22). Once you are confident of your own right standing in Jesus Christ and understand that He called you, He appointed you, then you will have confidence for everything else (John.15:16).

So, what's in a name? Work your way through the bullet points and make sure you read all the Scripture references. When you've finished, try going to prayer and asking the Lord to give you boldness in His name, the name of Jesus:

- There is no other name that shows more reverence or authority than the name of Jesus Christ (Acts.4:12; Philippians.2:9-11; Titus.2:13)
- All things that were made have been made through Him (John.1:3; Colossians.1:15-17)
- He was, even before time began. From before He was born of Mary (John.1:1; John.8:58; 2 Timothy.1:9)

- Nothing is too difficult for Him. No one is too far from Him to save (Mark.9:22-23; Hebrews.7:24-26; John.16:24)
- Jesus once asked a disciple, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am?” (John.14:9). He wants you to be sure of Him too (John.14:8-10; Hebrews.13:8)
- Some folks are kidding themselves and get stuck. He wants you to be sure and draw near (Matthew.7:21-23; Acts.19:13-16; Romans.10:13; Hebrews.10:22)
- Jesus has authority over the forces of nature! Who then, is He? (Mark.4:40-41; Luke.5:1-11)



“I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’”

Revelation.1:8 NIV

Day Six

I remember a particularly good fish and chip shop where a young man worked part-time evenings. The food was that good that folks used to queue down the road. A certain young lady began to frequent that chip shop and it soon became obvious to staff and customers alike, that she was in love with the young man.

She began doing silly things, if you know what I mean? Bringing little presents or, running errands for him. It was those little things that spoke so clearly about her feelings toward him. I don't know the outcome, so I can't guarantee a happy ending for them. Maybe I started going other places; it's a long time ago. Even so, I've never forgotten the way she adored that young man!

I suppose the question is, how far do you commit yourself when you love somebody? Or, when they obviously love you even more? Giving is the subject, in case you were wondering? What should a Christian give? How and when? How much is too much? Does it ever get silly? This can be a thorny topic for some folks. Especially when most people are sensitive about their pockets. Some folks are only happy if everything is kept to a minimum.

The Scriptures tell us clearly, that minimal will not do. What will do? If the heart is full then the offering will be likewise. Acceptable! (1 Corinthians.16:2; 2 Corinthians.9:6). This grace of giving is actually more important than many folks think. The Old Testament teaches that no one should appear before the Lord empty-handed (Deuteronomy.16:16). The New Testament teaches that sometimes, it may go further than that (Mark.12:43-44).

Be warned, a future ministry can sometimes hinge upon this single topic. This has been proved many times for Christians throughout history. Now, follow the bullet points below and see what conclusions you reach by looking at Scripture for yourself:

- Do you think the Lord will ever be in a position to owe us anything? (Romans.5:15; 2 Corinthians.9:15; Romans.11:35)
- What do you think about worship as an offering? Or, giving as an act of worship? (Psalm.50:14; Romans.12:1; Hebrews.13:15-16)

- How much of your income would you like the Lord to bless? Can you trust Him for that blessing? (Proverbs.3:9-10; Luke.19:8; Philippians.4:11-13)
- If you needed finance for a work God had called you to, how would you go about it? A jumble sale or, other fundraiser? Prayer? The support of like-minded Christians? (John.2:13-17; James.4:3; 1 Thessalonians.5:17; Philippians.4:15-16)
- Giving involves our time, hard work and preparation too. Do you think the cost is worth it? (Mark.10:28-30; Luke.14:25-33; Acts.20:19-20)
- What does the Lord love most of all when it comes to giving? When it's a duty? Or, when it's just love? (2 Corinthians.2:17; 2 Corinthians.9:7-8)



“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’”

Matthew.22:37 NIV

Day Seven

In the beginning God spoke to the first man (Genesis.2:16). That man sinned and by sinning, death came to the whole world. Even so the Lord reached out to the man and now, reaches out to you too (Genesis.3:8-9; Romans.5:15).

Now that you are in Christ, you understand He wants a conversational relationship with His disciples. He will speak to you if you will listen but, listening takes time and practice to develop (Colossians.2:6).

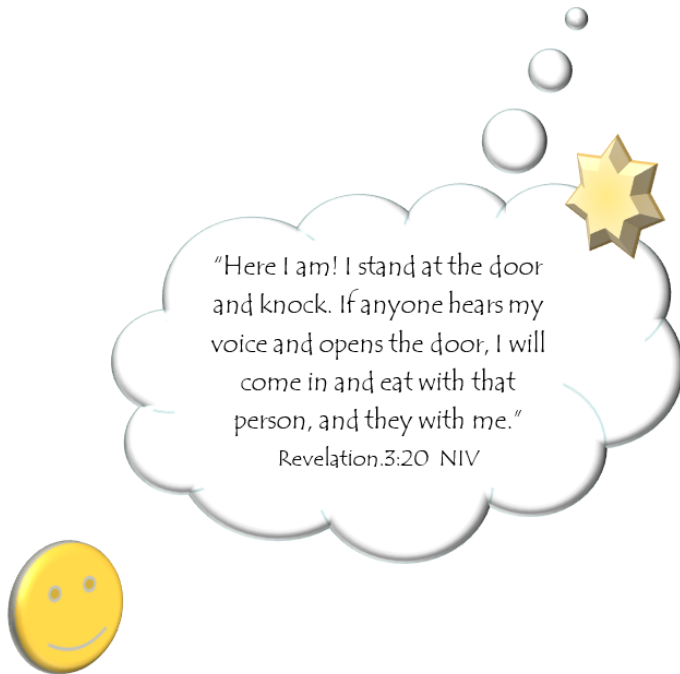
So what do we know about the way in which the Lord speaks to His people? He has sent His Holy Spirit and if you're in Christ, His Spirit has entered into you! He does not speak on His own authority, He is always confirmed with Scripture (John.16:5-15). Scripture contains truth and truth leads to freedom (John.8:31). The Holy Spirit never disagrees with Scripture. In fact, most often they act together in unison (Ephesians.1:13).

Has the Holy Spirit been speaking to you? Great, because that's the subject I would like to look at today. The Holy Spirit. With the following bullet points I hope to show, in what ways He speaks, the witnesses who speak alongside Him and particularly, how the Spirit and Scripture speak hand in hand.

Please read all the verses below and answer the questions according to exactly what you see:

- Hebrews.1:1-2 Who is the final revelation through whom God now speaks to man?
- Romans.10:8-14 Can you see the importance of the Spirit working with the Word when someone is saved?
- 1 John.5:6-8 Can you see that the Holy Spirit does not work by Himself?
- Acts.2:14-21 On the day of Pentecost, was the Holy Spirit confirmed with Scripture?
- Acts.16:6-10 How important do you think it is to be in agreement when the Holy Spirit gives direction?

- 2 Peter.3:14-18 What is the importance of patience and clarity before commitment to activity?
- Jude.1:20 What is the importance of praying in the Holy Spirit? Does the Holy Spirit always just give instruction?



YOU

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand."

John.10:27-28 NIV

And Now

Some of the things you have been reading through may seem quite hard at first. To learn to live your life differently now that you are a Christian will give you as many challenges as it does opportunities. Try not to worry about this but give your concerns to the Lord in prayer. This is exactly what He wants you to do now that you trust in Him.

You may also have many questions arising from your studies of these seven lessons in discipleship. If you do, then it may be of benefit to confide in one or more mature Christians to see what wisdom they can offer. Even then, it's always advisable to consult your own Bible and let this be the final authority.

No matter how you might feel at times when your faith is tested, remember God loves you and wants the very best for you. Learning to live in His best is a lifelong adventure for us all. If there are things we don't understand or, can't explain in the meantime, be patient knowing that God will provide.

When you commit your life to the love of the Lord, He will commit Himself unreservedly to you (Psalm.37:4-6).

Blessings in Christ

Roger and Susan

Stonefold Ministries

Stonefold Ministries is a teaching ministry set up by Roger and Susan to help people who want to develop their understanding of the Christian Faith. Roger is an accredited minister of the Independent Methodist Connexion whilst Susan is key in this partnership, offering much wisdom and prayerful support of all God's people. This booklet was written to help people who have newly come to faith by providing one week's lessons on which to reflect. The seven lessons will be of interest to any seriously enquiring Christian who seek to develop their faith in Christ. May the Lord bless you and keep you in His love.

For further information or to request more copies contact Roger and Susan on Tel: 0161 278 1518 or by email: lilyofthefield29@gmail.com

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The Resource Centre, Fleet Street, WIGAN WN5 0DS
T: 01942 223526 E: resource.centre@imchurches.org.uk