



READ THE BIBLE FOR

LIFE

Your Guide To Understanding & Living God's Word

LET'S BRING BIBLICAL LITERACY BACK



IT'S A WIRED WORLD—and today's Christians are constantly searching, surfing and skimming the internet for information about how to live their lives. If you want to “grow” in any area of life, “there’s an app for that.” Yet, the Bible, still our greatest source for how to live life well, too often lies unopened. Most believers are not reading it, understanding it, and letting it sink in enough to change their lives. It’s no wonder that biblical literacy, already in decline, has gone into a tailspin. More than 10% of Americans think Joan of arc was Noah’s wife, and less than half can name the first book of the Bible. Often those who profess to know Christ don’t do much better. This is an obvious tragedy for the church, but it also is a great loss for people generally. You simply cannot be considered a literate person without knowing the basics of the Bible, and you certainly can’t be a growing disciple of Christ.

The time has come to address this ever-deepening, biblical illiteracy that surrounds us. The time has come to bring the Bible back to a central place in our lives. That’s why LifeWay, in partnership with

the Ryan Center for Biblical Studies at Union University (www.uu.edu), has launched one of our most important initiatives of this decade, a biblical literacy initiative called *Read the Bible for Life*. It’s more than a series of resources—it’s a movement, and in homes, in churches, and in community gatherings across the country, it is going to help people rediscover, reengage and rebuild their lives on the Word of God.

ONE GREAT NEED FOR THE CHURCH

Wouldn’t you agree that we in the church need a renewal of our vision for engaging God’s Word? Every follower of Christ needs to be firmly grounded in the Bible, living a life saturated with a biblical view of the world and biblical patterns of living. In a recent survey by LifeWay Research, the #1 predictor of spiritual maturity among those surveyed was whether or not they spend time in the Bible on a daily basis! And yet, that same survey showed that only 16% of church-goers read the Bible every day. Another 32% read the

Bible at least once per week. And only 37% say that reading and studying the Bible has made a significant difference in the way they live their lives. A lack of daily interaction with the Word has resulted in an ignorance of the Bible’s content and a disconnect for many between the Story of Scripture and their own lives. Most, rather, take their cues for how to think and live from the cultural trends around them. *Read the Bible for Life* is an initiative to help churches and individuals grow in patterns of life that lead to deeper biblical literacy and thus an authentic walk with God.

TWO PRIMARY AREAS OF FOCUS

First:

We Need to Understand How to Read the Various Parts of Scripture Well.

In our own culture we understand that different types of literature work in different ways. We don’t read the comics page of the newspaper the way we read a history

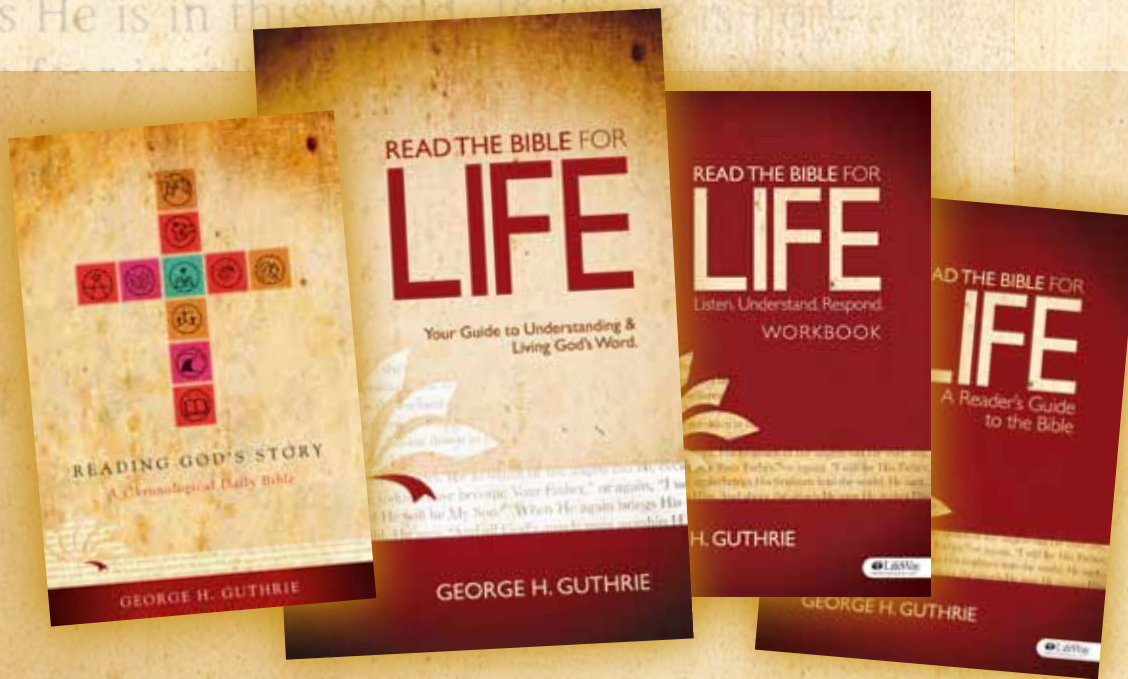
book. We don’t read a poem the same way we read a novel. God inspired the biblical writers to use a variety of types of literature, including stories, poetry, proverbs, parables, and others. We don’t read the stories of the Old Testament the same way we read the prophets. A psalm is different from a proverb. The teaching of Jesus does not work in the same way as a letter from Paul. *Read the Bible for Life* trains a person in how to read the various parts of Scripture well and how to apply the Word, once understood, to life.

Second:

We Need to Understand the Story to Enter the Story.

Most Christians lack an understanding of how the grand Story of the Bible fits together. *Read the Bible for Life* provides tools and a process in the life of a church for ongoing, life-changing training in understanding this grand Story of Scripture and how its various parts fit together. Once people understand the Story of Scripture, they understand how they themselves fit into that Story.

POWERFUL RESOURCES TO IGNITE BELIEVERS. *One Movement To Inspire The Church.*



FOUR MAIN TOOLS

THE CENTERPIECE OF THE BIBLICAL LITERACY INITIATIVE is a book entitled, *Read the Bible for Life: Your Guide To Understanding and Living God's Word*. This tool is destined to become a vitally important resource in the church as we learn to read the Scriptures for life change. Here is an accessible Bible appreciation tool for every man and woman—from the churchgoer to the casual reader, from the iPod-packing student to the seasoned businessman. *Read the Bible for Life* has what it takes to bring God's Word back to our lives—because its written in a way that we can all understand.

This book, with its warm, conversational style, will capture the interest of even the most scan-happy blogger. Instead of heavy

lessons packed with academic prose, every chapter of *Read the Bible for Life* takes the form of down-to-earth conversations with leading Bible scholars, pastors, and other Christian leaders. The result is a personal, heartwarming dialogue that's easy to understand and impossible to forget. The accompanying *Read the Bible for Life* video curriculum, hosted by Dr. George Guthrie, was created specifically for small groups and includes creative teaching segments, interactive exercises, as well as guest interviews with leading Christian scholars.

Other tools in the *Read the Bible for Life* initiative help readers understand Scripture by making sense of its grand design—by helping us see the Bible as one narrative, one continuous story. Once we understand the story better, it becomes a framework for understanding and living out our everyday encounters with God. In the end, you will begin to discover not only how every book, every chapter, every teaching has a place in the overarching story, but how your own story fits in God's plan for the world.

Both the book and video curriculum are set to be released in January 2011. They will be followed in October 2011 with two additional tools: *Reading God's Story: A Chronological Reading Bible* and *A Reader's Guide to the Bible*, which presents a one-year chronological Bible reading plan along with a brief commentary for each day's reading. The *Chronological Bible* is organized to make clear the step-by-step development of the biblical story and includes helpful introductory articles on each "Act" and "Scene" in that story. The *Reader's Guide*, on the other hand, coaches the reader day-by-day on how to read the Scripture well and how to apply the Scripture to life. All four tools will be supplemented with free, downloadable resources from the website ReadtheBibleforLife.com. Taken together, these resources lay the foundation for a vibrant campaign in the church for addressing the troubling decline of biblical literacy, putting God's Word back in its rightful place at the center of our lives and churches. We need to be a people who *Read the Bible for Life*.



A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

Pull Up A Chair

“LET ME TELL YOU why I wrote the book, *Read the Bible for Life*, along with crafting the other tools in the *Read the Bible for Life* initiative. To be honest, I really didn’t have time to write the book, but I felt very strongly that it needed to be written—almost demanded to be written—and written as soon as possible. There are two main reasons.

First, I believe with all my heart, on a number of levels, that it is very, very important that we read the Bible and read it well. Second, we are not reading the Bible. I wish you could hear my tone through these letters I am dropping down on the page—I don’t want to sound alarmist, or critical, or preachy. I am very excited that you have joined me in this conversation, and I don’t want to lose you here. But, let me speak frankly. I am very concerned about where we are currently in terms of our reading of the Bible, and I want you to be concerned with me. Let me say it again: we are not reading the Bible, much less reading it well.

Yet, as we learn to read on a daily basis, growing in our skill in Bible reading, the rhythm of a life lived deeply in God’s Word will become as nurturing as our daily meals and as spiritually strengthening as daily exercise. It takes discipline, but Bible reading can come to be a discipline of delight if we open our hearts and lives to it. So, I invite you to pour yourself a cup of tea or coffee, and join me as we discuss how we might begin to read the Bible for life.

GEORGE H. GUTHRIE is the Benjamin W. Perry Professor of Bible at Union University (www.uu.edu) in Jackson, Tennessee and a widely published author. He helped establish and is now a Senior Fellow at Union’s Ryan Center for Biblical Studies, which is committed to promoting sound Bible reading, study, and interpretation at the grassroots level of the church. Guthrie has also participated in developing or revising several popular Bible translations, including the Holman Christian Standard Bible, The English Standard Version, and the New Living Translation.

RATHER THAN A “textbook” approach, *Read the Bible for Life* is written in an engaging and informative interview-style format that will appeal to anyone. As you listen in on these conversations, you’ll enjoy spending time with leading scholars, pastors, and other Christian leaders who have spent much of their lives studying the Bible and who are truly excited to be with you. So pull up a chair and join the conversation.

- Reading Bible Translations*
—DR. CLINTON E. ARNOLD
Talbot School of Theology
- Reading the Psalms & Proverbs of the Old Testament*
—DR. DAVID M. HOWARD
Bethel Seminary
- Reading the Teaching of Jesus*
—DR. CRAIG BLOMBERG
Denver Seminary
- Reading the Bible in Context*
—DR. ANDREAS KÖSTENBERGER
Southeastern Seminary
- Reading the Stories of the Gospels & Acts*
—DR. DARRELL BOCK
Dallas Theological Seminary
- Reading the Letters of the New Testament*
—DR. DOUGLAS J. MOO
Blanchard Professor of New Testament,
Wheaton College
- Reading the Bible in times of Difficulty & Sorrow*
—MICHAEL CARD
Singer/Songwriter/Author
- Reading the Bible with the Church*
—DR. DAVID PLATT
Pastor, The Church at Brook Hills
- Reading the Bible as a Guide for Life*
—DR. DAVID S. DOCKERY
President, Union University
- Reading the Prophets of the Old Testament*
—DR. GARY SMITH
Union University
- Reading the Book of Revelation*
—DR. J. SCOTT DUVAL
Ouachita Baptist University
- Reading Various Translations of the Bible*
—DR. MARK STRAUSS
Bethel Seminary San Diego
- Reading the Bible with the Church*
—BUDDY GRAY
Pastor, Hunter Street Baptist Church
- Reading the Stories of the Old Testament*
—DR. BRUCE WALTKE
- Reading the Bible in the Family*
—PATRICIA A. GUTHRIE
- Reading the Bible for Personal Prayer & Worship*
—DR. DONALD S. WHITNEY
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
- Reading the Laws of the Old Testament*
—DR. J. DANIEL HAYS
Ouachita Baptist University

BIBLICAL LITERACY

addressing the problem one church at a time.

THE READ THE BIBLE FOR LIFE INITIATIVE

In the *Read the Bible for Life* initiative a church, as a community, utilizes helpful tools in an exciting, biblically-oriented, whole-church approach to greater biblical literacy.

FALL 2011

Beginning in the fall of 2011, in 9 creative, interactive sessions, a church can use the video curriculum to train their community in how to read the Bible more effectively. Daily exercises and small group discussion questions are provided. The book *Read the Bible for Life* amply supplements the learning experience of the video curriculum, taking the learner deeper into the topics introduced in the curriculum. Churches can get volume discounts on the book.

JANUARY 2012

Then, beginning January 1, 2012, the whole church can read through the story of Scripture together, using the *Reader's Guide to the Bible*, or *Reading God's Story: A Chronological Reading Bible*, or both, as the pastor preaches through the story in that year. Rich, downloadable resources will be available to a church on the initiative website, ReadtheBibleforLife.com. There you will find small group resources, suggested sermon series, as well as resources for planning worship services. The combination of training, daily interaction with God's Word, small group discussion and encouragement, the Word preached, and worship together as a community, promises an effective means to greater depth in biblical literacy for your church and thus a more biblically-oriented life together as God's people. These tools can also be used in an ongoing way to train new members and new believers in how to read the Bible effectively, laying a strong foundation for their lives and the church community.

Come join us as we learn to read the Bible for life.

ReadTheBibleForLife.com



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