

# Eat this Book



## Eat this Book Study Guide

When I was a child, my mother put me in an Evangelical-Protestant Vacation Bible School camp. We were Catholic at the time. It was quite a scandal. I remember being mildly surprised at the way in which the whole camp seemed focused on the Bible. I felt like I knew the Bible since we were a pretty devout family. We read the Bible at home. My mom was in what seemed like never-ending Bible studies with friends and neighbours. But these people seemed nearly obsessed with the Bible. They memorized it. They talked about it. Everyone carried one on their person - even my little eight year-old friends gripped a big black leather-bound book with both hands as they toddled around the camp. We even sang songs about or perhaps *to* the Bible. I can remember one of them: "The B-I-B-L-E, yes that's the book for me/I stand alone on the Word

of God/The B-I-B-L-E." You may have had similar memories from childhood.

As I have grown a bit in my understanding of things, I look back with appreciation on what I learned from both my Catholic and evangelical upbringing. From the Catholics I learned a sense of sacramental mystery - that things are not always what they seem. From the evangelicals I learned a love for the Scriptures. When I joined a youth group in grade 8, I enthusiastically memorized the book of Romans and the book of James. I didn't understand most of it, but it seemed powerful and true. In grade 9 I read through the Bible in a year. I loved the stories and the poetry. I loved the way in which the Bible took and addressed my questions...and the way that the text seemed to grow with me. In university I loved the way that the

**SOUTHSIDE**  
COMMUNITY CHURCH



...and the Word became  
flesh, and moved into the  
neighbourhood...(John 1)

# Overview

August 15-21: What is It?  
John 1:14-18

August 22-28: What does it  
say?  
Revelation 1:1-20

August 29- September 4:  
How do we use it?  
Luke 24:13-35

texts provide a window into an ancient middle-eastern world that would otherwise have been lost. Now, as a parent, I love the way that the stories seem to always clarify something essential for understanding the shape of human life; so many of the stories that once seemed bizarre to me now display profound wisdom. I still love the Scriptures and marvel at the marvelous depth of these texts to inform, shape, challenge and comfort me in new ways for my current stage of life.

This narrative might seem slightly confusing. What, in the end, are the Scriptures? What kind of book is this? Is it something whose words are so profound and inspired that we should commit them to memory and repeat over our lives? Is it a collection of ancient wisdom? A book of history that gives us insight into a different world and culture? A set of stories that helps us to understand our own? Of course. Yes. The Bible is all of this and more.

And yet, the song I memorized as a child is wrong. Even though the Scriptures are a profound and inspired gift from God, they are not an object of our worship. We do not worship or revere the Scriptures in the way that Muslims revere the Qur'an. Muslims do not translate the Qur'an because they believe there is something rigidly given in the original Arabic. We translate the Bible and put the Bible in the hands of children because we believe God is at work *through* the Bible. Nor is the Bible something upon which we "stand alone," but it is the Word of God because it is the text in which the Word - Jesus Christ himself - meets *us* and speaks to us in the Holy Spirit.

Rather than "stand alone" and "on" the Scriptures, the Bible helps us to live among the great communities of faith that have struggled to understand and worship God just like us. The book of Genesis places us among the community of Abraham so that we might see ourselves

inheriting the struggles and victories, the faith of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob. So also, the Gospels place us with the disciples, the rich young ruler, blind Bartimaeus and others who find themselves in the presence of Jesus. Even now, we do not read the Scriptures alone, but with 2000 years of church history standing behind us and with billions of other Christians across the globe. We read, memorize, meditate on, question, and respond to the Bible with God's people across space and time. Even if we wanted to...we could not stand alone!

Furthermore, we do not stand on the Scriptures at all. These are not truths that we can master or definitively know. The Bible is not a book that we do something *with* but rather a text which does something to us. We do not stand on the Bible. We sit under it: we under-stand it. When we learn the stories, memorize key texts, meditate upon its words, study the background of stories, listen to teaching on it...we do this so that it might shape us and help us to see and act in the world as God's people.

The title for our series comes from Ezekiel 3. In this passage, God invites Ezekiel to eat a scroll (book) that contains God's word. When Ezekiel does this, he reports that the scroll - the words of God - taste sweet like honey. After his meal, Ezekiel then goes out and begins to speak God's timely and prophetic word to Israel. Eat this Book. It is a picture of intimate engagement with God's Word that profoundly shapes our life in the real world. We do not stand alone on the Bible. We do not learn it so that we can have some great facts on-hand for Bible trivia. We ingest it so that it might nourish us from the inside out.

As we move into the fall, let us become re-acquainted with our Bibles. Each week will have a series of exercises for engaging and praying our Bibles for the sake of learning to sit-under these teachings.



### What is It?

In sports or in movies, we might say that a really good performance by an athlete or an actor is “a revelation.” What we mean by this is that their performance taught us something we didn’t know before. We might have known that said actor or athlete was talented - but we had no idea that they were capable of this kind of brilliance. The Bible is a type of revelation. Or, more clearly, it is one of the ways in which God reveals himself by pointing to definitive events of revelation in history, where God has made himself known to his people. Like the example of the actor or athlete, God reveals himself - his character, his passion, his intentions, his faithfulness, his very being - in real-world performance. For example, in saving Israel from Egypt or in raising Jesus from the dead, God reveals just about all we need to know about his power and his character. So also, in our daily lives, God shows himself and therefore reveals himself to us.

The Bible is our faithful and inspired account of this real-world work of God in history. The Bible tells us that God shows himself to us, and also *how* God shows himself to us. As such, it is a collection of stories, prophecies, poems, sayings, and historical texts that all help us to recognize, worship, and respond to the God who still actively speaks to us.

The Bible records and points toward the revelation of God’s character in a number of different ways. The poetry, stories, prophecies all communicate different aspects of God’s life while also moving and connecting with us in different ways. To read the Bible, we must become acquainted with these different genres of literature. Therefore, this week, we will read from a variety of different genres or types of texts in the Bible. Throughout, we will ask: what does this form of text help us to see or understand about God? And, what is it saying?



## Weekly Shared Practices

**Strength:** We are about to head into the fall. Reflect on your use of time, treasure, and talent in the past year. What seasons/schedules were life giving for you? Which ones were not? How do you think God wants you to organize your life so that you can live generously in all three categories?

**Neighbour:** Who have you planned to host this summer but missed? Plan to get together with them or have them over.

**One Another:** Pick one or two people from your MG and find a way to encourage them this week. Send a note, take their kids, etc.

## Daily Shared Practices: Prayer

### Morning Prayer

Use Psalm 119:10-16 as a Prayer of commitment

- 10 With my whole heart I seek you;  
do not let me stray from your commandments.  
11 I treasure your word in my heart,  
so that I may not sin against you.  
12 Blessed are you, O LORD;  
teach me your statutes.  
13 With my lips I declare  
all the ordinances of your mouth.  
14 I delight in the way of your decrees  
as much as in all riches.  
15 I will meditate on your precepts,  
and fix my eyes on your ways.  
16 I will delight in your statutes;  
I will not forget your word.

### Evening Prayer

God reveals himself. Reflect on where you have seen God today.

\*Father, where did you show yourself to me today?

\*Jesus, when did I encounter you today? Did I recognize you?

\*Spirit, what have you spoken to me today?

Pray about your answer to these questions.





## Thursday - Stories/Origins

Genesis 2:1-25; John 1:1-18

What does this type of text help us to see?

What does it say about God?

.....

## Friday - Stories/History

1 Samuel 1:1-28

What does this type of text help us to see?

What does it say about God?

.....

## Saturday

John 1:1-18

Dwell in this text. What does it say about God? About us?

.....

## Monday - Poetry/Songs

Psalms 16

What does this type of text help us to see?

What does it say about God?

.....

## Tuesday - Prophecy

Isaiah 60:1-11; Revelation 21:1-7

What does this type of text help us to see?

What does it say about God?

# Week 2



## Revelation 1:1-20

### What does it Say?

Revelation 1 might be an odd way to sum up the biblical story. But I have chosen it because it meticulously draws upon biblical imagery in pointing definitively to Jesus Christ as both Messiah and Lord. In the end, this is the whole point of the Bible: that God has come near to reconcile and redeem the world in Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord. The whole of the Scriptures points to Jesus. Theologians call this the “Christocentric hermeneutic” of the Bible. As Christians, we interpret the Bible according to Jesus and we see that the Bible points to and tells us about Jesus. I dare you to use “christocentric hermeneutic” this week.

Our readings will not focus on Revelation, but rather on some high points of the biblical story.



## Weekly Shared Practices

**Strength:** We are about to head into the fall. Reflect on your use of time, treasure, and talent in the past year. What seasons/schedules were life giving for you? Which ones were not? How do you think God wants you to organize your life so that you can live generously in all three categories?

**Neighbour:** Who have you planned to host this summer but missed? Plan to get together with them or have them over.

**One Another:** Pick one or two people from your MG and find a way to encourage them this week. Send a note, take their kids, etc.

## Daily Shared Practices: Prayer

### Morning Prayer

Use Psalm 119:10-16 as a Prayer of commitment

- 10 With my whole heart I seek you;  
do not let me stray from your commandments.
- 11 I treasure your word in my heart,  
so that I may not sin against you.
- 12 Blessed are you, O LORD;  
teach me your statutes.
- 13 With my lips I declare  
all the ordinances of your mouth.
- 14 I delight in the way of your decrees  
as much as in all riches.
- 15 I will meditate on your precepts,  
and fix my eyes on your ways.
- 16 I will delight in your statutes;  
I will not forget your word.

### Evening Prayer

God reveals himself. Reflect on where you have seen God today.

\*Father, where did you show yourself to me today?

\*Jesus, when did I encounter you today? Did I recognize you?

\*Spirit, what have you spoken to me today?

Pray about your answer to these questions.



# Daily Shared Practices: Scripture

## Thursday - Creation

Genesis 1:26-2:25; Psalm 8

What does this tell us about God? Ourselves? Our world?

.....

## Friday - Fall

Genesis 3-4, Psalm 14

What does this tell us about God? Ourselves? Our world?

.....

## Saturday - Covenant/Call

Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 15; Exodus 2:1-11

What does this tell us about God? Ourselves? Our world?

.....

## Monday - Redemption

Mark 1:14-34, 2 Cor. 5:17, Galatians 2:17-3:14; Revelation 1

What does this tell us about God? Jesus? Ourselves? Our world?

.....

## Tuesday - Consummation

2 Cor. 5:17-6:2, Ephesians 2:11-22, Revelation 21

What does this tell us about God? Jesus? Ourselves? Our world?



# Week 3



Luke 24:13-35

## How do we use it?

So far we have looked at the Bible as a collection of different genres that are God's revelation because they point to the real-world things that God does and says. We also looked at how the Bible can be seen as a multi-faceted story that focuses completely on Jesus. God, in Jesus, has redeemed and rescued us. This week, we will explore different uses for the Bible, although "uses" is decidedly the wrong term. We do not 'use' the Bible as a tool, but rather dwell in it, chew on it, understand it.

Thus, we will focus on two practices of engagement with the text: meditation and memorizing.

The past two weeks, we have already explored one of the primary ways to approach the Bible: to read and reflect on it in large chunks. It is important that we sit down and read it as a story. But we must also sit with parts of the Bible and allow God to speak to us. The text is always richer than we think it is. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we must learn to sit with Jesus in the text and allow him to say old things in new ways to us.



## Weekly Shared Practices

**Strength:** We are about to head into the fall. Reflect on your use of time, treasure, and talent in the past year. What seasons/schedules were life giving for you? Which ones were not? How do you think God wants you to organize your life so that you can live generously in all three categories?

**Neighbour:** Who have you planned to host this summer but missed? Plan to get together with them or have them over.

**One Another:** Pick one or two people from your MG and find a way to encourage them this week. Send a note, take their kids, etc.

## Daily Shared Practices: Prayer

### Morning Prayer

Use Psalm 119:10-16 as a Prayer of commitment

- 10 With my whole heart I seek you;  
do not let me stray from your commandments.  
11 I treasure your word in my heart,  
so that I may not sin against you.  
12 Blessed are you, O LORD;  
teach me your statutes.  
13 With my lips I declare  
all the ordinances of your mouth.  
14 I delight in the way of your decrees  
as much as in all riches.  
15 I will meditate on your precepts,  
and fix my eyes on your ways.  
16 I will delight in your statutes;  
I will not forget your word.

### Evening Prayer

God reveals himself. Reflect on where you have seen God today.

- \*Father, where did you show yourself to me today?  
\*Jesus, when did I encounter you today? Did I recognize you?  
\*Spirit, what have you spoken to me today?

Pray about your answer to these questions.



## Thursday - Dwell

Read Luke 24:13-35 two times slowly

- (1) Where does your attention rest? Write this down.
- (2) What is God saying to you in this text for today?

---

## Friday - Imagine

Read Luke 24:13-35 two times slowly

- (1) Place yourself in the story as one of the persons on the road. What do you feel? What is it that Jesus says to you?
- (2) Spend five minutes writing out the dialogue either on the road or around the dinner table with Jesus. What do you ask? What does he say? What do you feel? How does Jesus look?

---

## Saturday - Meditate

Read Luke 24:30-35 slowly and meditatively in three different movements:

- (1) Read the text savoring each word. Where does your attention rest? Pause wherever the Spirit invites you to pause.
- (2) Meditate or Reflect upon the part of the text where the Spirit invited you to pause. Memorize it, “chew” on it, rest in it.
- (3) Respond to the text in prayer. Use the text to help you pray to God. Bring to him your concerns and hopes as well as the thoughts raised by this text.

---

## Monday - Dwell

Read Luke 24:13-35 two times slowly

- (1) Where does your attention rest? Write this down.
- (2) What is God saying to you in this text for today?

---

## Tuesday - Meditate

Read Luke 24:30-35 slowly and meditatively in three different movements:

- (1) Read the text savoring each word. Where does your attention rest? Pause wherever the Spirit invites you to pause.
- (2) Meditate or Reflect upon the part of the text where the Spirit invited you to pause. Memorize it, “chew” on it, rest in it.
- (3) Respond to the text in prayer. Use the text to help you pray to God. Bring to him your concerns and hopes as well as the thoughts raised by this text.