

## 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021 10 am MOT: My Bible Reading

Service led by Michelle Harris, talks by Penny Bryans and Michelle Harris,  
Readings by Isaac Harris and Jessica Harris, Intercessions by Ruma and David

*This transcript is only of the readings and talks*

1 <sup>st</sup> Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 [ERV].....	1
1 <sup>st</sup> Talk: Why Read the Bible.....	1
2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading: Matthew 4:1-4 [NLT].....	3
2 <sup>nd</sup> Talk: How to Read the Bible.....	4
Discussion: Resources to aid reading the Bible.....	7

### **1<sup>st</sup> Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 [ERV]**

**14** But you should continue following the teaching you learned. You know it is true, because you know you can trust those who taught you. **15** You have known the Holy Scriptures since you were a child. These Scriptures are able to make you wise. And that wisdom leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is given by God. And all Scripture is useful for teaching and for showing people what is wrong in their lives. It is useful for correcting faults and teaching the right way to live. **17** Using the Scriptures, those who serve God will be prepared and will have everything they need to do every good work.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Talk: Why Read the Bible**

[Penny Bryans:]

Hello, good morning. I have to say that I have found this really challenging, to do a mini-talk on the massive Bible – a book that's all about our amazing God, and what God has done to rescue us from sin and death, and how He's still doing it. And please forgive me where I have missed obvious things that really should have been included.

So, we're doing an MOT on reading the Bible. Last month it was on prayer. An MOT, as I'm sure most people know, is a test for a vehicle to make sure that it is roadworthy, able to do the job it's meant to do without being a danger to the driver and passengers or to other road users, so it's not going to fall apart and it's not going to be dangerous: fit for purpose. So, last month, Andrew looked at our prayer lives being fit for purpose. This month, we're looking at the Bible. I'm going to take a quick look at roughly, why we might read the Bible and Michelle will have a look afterwards at how. I think I'd like to make it clear, though, that when we talk about reading the Bible that that really includes listening, and it really means knowing the Bible, because obviously some people are unable to read it but they are able to hear it.

So, we read the Bible, as Isaac read for us, because the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. They are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training us. And all this, so that we may be equipped for every good work. That is, to live our lives in the fullness to which God has called us.

Now, I'd like to share with you an acronym that Jeremy's dad was quite fond of. Perhaps you already know it. I'll tell it to you and give you a few seconds to see what you think it might mean. Please may I have the first slide. Thank you. So have a look, it's 'C D M'. What do you think 'C D M' stands for? Have a chat amongst yourselves.



C D M

Right. Well, I don't know what you said amongst yourselves, but I wonder how many people said 'Cadbury's Dairy Milk'? I've tried to use the right colours

there. And Jeremy's dad would get it out of the cupboard and offer you a bit of CDM. He was quite partial to it. Anyway, having put that into your head, I'm going to use those three letters as three rough points for why we read the Bible.

Please could we have the next slide. Okay. C stands for 'character'. We read the Bible to know God's character to go deeper with Him, to know Almighty God, to know Father God, to know the God who made the world, and made and knows and loves each little individual person in it. The disciples really knew Jesus because they spent so much time with Jesus. They learned to trust Him in every situation, those deep times of prayer that Andrew mentioned last month, those deep times of reading His Word, and God revealing Himself to us, will lead increasingly to know how to trust Him in our own situations, and in those for other people.

## Character

Next slide please. Thank you. Now the D stands for 'direct' and I've had to fit in a few words into 'direct': the DI comes from 'discipleship'. The R and E from 'rebuking', and the C for 'correction', and the T for 'training.' Isaac read them all out earlier.

## Direct Discipleship Rebuking Correction Training

- The 'discipleship' part is the reading of our Bible daily, the routine of just making sure we stay in tune with Jesus, keeping in touch with God.
- In rebuking and correction, we need to know God's Word to know what is right and where we may have gone wrong, to show us the right way out of the situation, which way we should go.
- And in training, we, in our lives, we need to learn new ways of doing things from God and learn how to put them into practice.

Next slide please. Thank you. The M in CDM stands for 'maturity', putting our roots deeper into God, growing in our life with Him, and increasingly, His life will flow out of us. As we get to know God better, as we give ourselves up to Him to be disciples, we will be increasingly led by the Holy Spirit, more experienced at trusting God, more aware of our need to depend on Him, and we will grow in maturity. Does anyone know a mature Christian who doesn't know their Bible?

## Maturity

Last slide please. Thanks. So, these three areas are reasons that we really do need to read the Bible, and you could even use them to say that really knowing God and His character will direct us into maturity.

Thank you, please could we have the slides off now.

## CDM Character Direct Maturity

Now, I'd just like to add a few more things before I finish. It's easy to read the Bible just as a book, in a hurry, to read the words, to learn knowledge. But the Bible is God's written Word to mankind. It is God-breathed. It's His living Word. God's Word is life-giving, life-changing and life-preserving. We need to read it, asking God to talk to us by His Holy Spirit. We need to read it, expecting to hear Him speak. When we give ourselves to reading the Bible, just as with prayer, it's not just for nothing, it's for actual change, change in us and our lives, in our shared life with other believers, and for the world around us. That really makes a difference. Have you ever watched someone slip away from God and back into the world? Have you seen how things change for them, very often, little by little? Perhaps start by missing a few meetings, distancing from one another, perhaps still talking the talk with you, but then rationalising that you don't need to go to church, you don't need to be with other Christians. With the lack of God's input in their lives, slowly they start

to feel awkward in the presence of believers, and there are plenty of reasons why they don't want to remain in fellowship with other believers. Their prayer and Bible habits will have been the first things that slipped.

But God has sanctified us. That means He's called us and cleansed us, forgiven us and He's set us apart to be different from people who don't believe Him. And He's given us everything we need to live in this world, but not to live like the rest of the world, by praying and reading the Bible, staying in tune with God and His people, we are keeping ourselves for Him, for the good and amazing things that He has for us to do. And we are better protected and armed for whatever we come up against.

Now, some of this sounds a bit heavy doesn't it? Training and rebuking and correction. But as God's children, we do need Him to deal with us as a good father should. However, there is more than just the training and correction. The Bible is a gift to us from our Heavenly Father, who loves us and wants to equip us for fullness of life in Him with a full life. Let me read Psalm 19, verses seven to eight.<sup>1</sup>

- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.
- 8 The precepts of the Lord are right,  
giving joy to the heart.  
The commands of the Lord are radiant,  
enlightening the eyes.

This is very good news. God's Word revives our soul, makes us wise, brings joy to our heart and allows us to see what He wants us to see. He really changes us; and through us, He changes the world. So, if you are finding it hard to get reading the Bible, or to hear God when you do read or listen, remember what's in it. Remember the 'C D M'. The Bible is a gift to us from the God who loves us and wants us to have a full life in Him, not a partial life.

Well, I'd just like to pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You so much for giving us the Bible, and for helping us to understand it. I pray that You will revive our souls, refresh us and make us wise with Your wisdom. And I pray particularly for people who are struggling, that You will bring real joy to their hearts, as they read Your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Matthew 4:1-4 [NLT]**

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. 2 For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.

3 During that time the devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread."

4 But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say,

'People do not live by bread alone,  
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

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1 [NIVUK 1984]

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Talk: How to Read the Bible**

Can you grab your Bible, and just hold it in your hand for a minute. What's the Bible like for you? Is it an old friend?

What words come to mind? There's loads of passages in the Bible that talk about what the Bible is like.

Psalm 119:105 says the Word is like a lamp which lights up our path.

Psalm 119[:103] talks about God's Word being sweeter than honey, because His words are so enjoyable to hear and to read.

Psalm 12 verse 6 says that God's Word is like gold and silver, because the metals look so perfect and God's Word is perfect as well.

Jeremiah 23 talks about God's Word being like a hammer, because it can destroy evil and crush sin including the things that we've done.

Hebrews 4 talks about God's Word being like a sword (don't have a sword), but a sword that can cut and can divide. And when it cuts, it reveals the truth about our thoughts and our actions.

Proverbs chapter 4 talks about God's Word giving us life and making us healthy, the way that medicine makes us healthy.

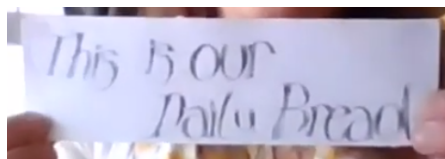
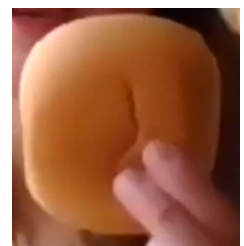
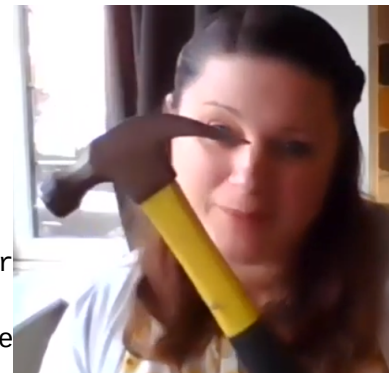
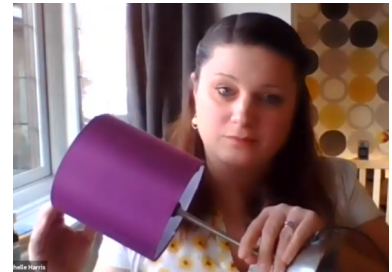
Isaiah 55 talks about God's Word being like rain, which waters the ground, and it makes things grow because God's Word makes us healthy and strong, in living in God's way.

Luke 8 talks about God's Word being like a seed, like a little tomato seed. And when it's planted in the heart of people who hear it and obey it, it grows.

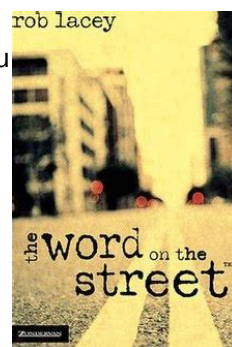
Matthew chapter 4, we've just read, speaks about God's Word being like bread. Bread's a food that's like rice or potato: people eat it every day to keep their bodies going, and we need God's Word every day to keep us going in our walk with God. My bookmark that I started doing, I went with doing "This is our daily bread." And I'll continue doodling on that later. Yeah, I really love the metaphor that Jesus uses about the Bible being like bread. He's actually quoting from a passage much earlier in the Bible, in Deuteronomy.

I don't know about you, but I love bread. I love all the different types and flavours, all the different textures, you get all different shapes and sizes: you get wraps, you get naans, you get just normal sliced loaf, it's just, it's amazing. I think that Jesus uses the metaphor of bread because everybody knows about it, everyone can identify with it, everyone, even if you've got a dietary requirement, we've all got an experience of bread.

So how are bread and Bible similar? Well, you've got your basic day-to-day bread. That's kind of like, yeah, NIV bog-standard, which is a bit like, yeah, white loaf or brown loaf if you're very unhealthy. It's your standard go-to, it's the thing that fortifies you, it fills you up, and you just get your regular amount of it.



Then you've got your bread that's full of nuts or seeds, and so that might be more like an ESV Bible, or you've got the – ooh, this one is the Hebrew/Greek interlinear Bible, so it's got all the different types of the Bible next to each other, so you can get really deep and it's got loads of detail and you can check exactly what each word means or what the original versions of it were; or you've got things that it's got like extra flavour or, you know, it's got a bit of texture or it's just a really, like, treats-type Bible, one that maybe you can soak in, and so you've got things like *The Message*<sup>2</sup>, where you can just read it like a novel, and it might not be a word-for-word translation, but, you know, it gives a different flavour to the Word of God. You don't use it very often but it's there as a treat; or something like *The Word on the Street*<sup>3</sup>, that – I mean this is great, it puts it into really everyday language. I mean literally just open it up randomly, and we get to Romans, it says things like “Stay on the right side of the law, because like it or not, God put the law there in the first place. So if you scream for anarchy, if you trash the system, you're doing it straight at God.” So clearly that's nowhere near a direct translation, but it does give a flavour of the Bible and then a flavour of God's Word, and helps you to kind of stretch your brain a bit and maybe think about things in a different way.



So there's all these different types of Bibles that you can use. And they've all got different purposes. If you really want to dig into it, then obviously you've got these things like the ESV. Or you've got the ones like *Inspire Bible*<sup>4</sup>, I love this Bible. It's so beautiful, and like, it's got things that you can colour in and things that you can use to kind of meditate and focus and just sit and spend some time really soaking in God's Word.



And even within the Bible itself, there's all different types of writing: there's poetry, there's factual history, there's a love story, there's so much drama. Like, it's great how you can get young people involved in the Bible when you talk about things like tent pegs being stuck through people's heads and stuff like that. But both the Bible and bread, they give us sustenance, one fulfils our physical needs, and gives us energy that we need to survive the day-to-day. And the other fulfils our spiritual needs, which keeps our relationship with God going day to day.

How do I know who God is? The Bible tells me.

How do I know the stories of God's people like the heroes in the faith that we sang about at the start? I know about those heroes of the faith because the Bible tells me about them.

How do I know what sin is and what's going to separate me from God? The Bible tells me.

How do I know who Jesus is, that died to pay the price for my sin, that His death sets me free from sin, so that I can be in a right relationship with God? The Bible tells me.

How do I know what Jesus taught? The Bible tells me.

How can I learn how Jesus lived His life so that I can imitate it, and I can follow Him? The Bible tells me.

How do I know what to believe is right and true? Like, if it's in the Bible, then I know it's true.

How do I know how to live a life that's pleasing to God? Because the Bible tells me. How does God speak to me in my everyday?

He speaks to me through His Word, through the Bible.

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2 The Message by Eugene Peterson, ISBN 9781631468223

3 The Word on the Street by Rob Lacey, ISBN 9780310932253

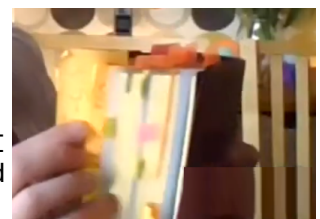
4 Inspire Bible – NLT: The Bible for Creative Journaling (Tyndale House Foundation)- ISBN 9781496413734



This is is the true, living, breathed Word of God. It's the way I know God's story, it's the way I know how my life fits in with His story. But if I don't spend time reading His Word, then how can I know Him? Both Penny and I've been doing the Bible In A Year, and although we use completely different apps and books, and it's not the first time that I've attempted it, but I'm hoping to get further than March this year, although I'm a couple of days behind. (It's really hard to do weekends – I don't know why.) Yeah, the difference this year, though, is that it's the first year that I've done it, as a sitting-down-and-properly-studying-and-reading-God's-Word thing. Like in previous years, I've listened to it on my phone. And, oh my goodness, the voice is so like chill and relaxing, but it probably sends me to sleep, or I've done it so that I've just read the passages but haven't really done any study behind it.

But this year, the story of God has really come alive for me. I've loved digging into scripture, I've explained it to a few people like this: so my in-laws, they live in Nuneaton. And I can explain the route from Kenilworth to Nuneaton pretty well. But if I tried to do it all in one fell swoop, it wouldn't really work. I kind of have to do it in sections and kind of make those sections connect together. So I could tell you how to get from Kenilworth to the Asda roundabout and how to get from the Asda roundabout to the Ricoh roundabout and how to get from the Ricoh up to George Eliot. Are you with me? You're picturing along, because you know those different sections. And then when you get to the George Eliot, then I can tell you the way through Nuneaton to get to their house. And this year when I've been reading the Bible, it's kind of connected all those different bits of God's story together for me, so I knew, like, the overarching, the story of, you know, creation, Jesus, redemption. (That's like the shortest version of God's story ever!) But I knew that, I knew even different sections of it, so I knew, like Abraham to Isaac, Isaac to Jacob, Jacob and his sons, like I knew the whole thing about Joseph and his technicolour dreamcoat, I knew that story so well, but I've never really connected together the 12 tribes of Israel were the 12 sons of Jacob. I knew about the name change of Jacob to Israel, but, I don't know, it just hadn't... I don't know whether I just hadn't got the kind of connection of, like, the place, and Israel the person, I don't know, but anyway suddenly this year, I had this proper lightbulb moment and it just connected everything together. For everyone else, I mean maybe that was common knowledge for you. But for me, it suddenly clicked into place.

And I've also been doing *Lectio 365* on and off. Again, I wouldn't say that I did it the whole way through. But every time they read a Psalm that I like, I go to my Bible and I stick a Post-it note in it and you can see there's quite a few. This is a Bible I got just for Christmas this year. So I stick a Post-it note in every Psalm that stood out to me. And it just means that like I can go to them really easily and there's suddenly a praise Psalm there. So, you know, Psalm 113 is<sup>5</sup>



- 1 Praise the LORD!  
Praise, O servants of the LORD,  
praise the name of the LORD!
- 2 Blessed be the name of the LORD  
from this time forth and forevermore!
- 3 From the rising of the sun to its setting,  
the name of the LORD is to be praised!

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5 [ESV]

So I can easily now find these Psalms that mean something and help me to connect with God.

I know that taking 10 minutes out of my day just to soak in God's Word feels like a genuine indulgence. And I know how hard it is for a lot of people to get 10 minutes in their day. I've had four kids. I know what it's like, I know that sometimes it's hard to even go for a wee on your own without having someone come in and bash on the door, never mind taking time to soak in God's Word. But I'd really encourage you, whether it's getting up 10 minutes earlier, going to bed 10 minutes later, or both, or get your other half to take the kids for 10 minutes, like just before they wind down from work – just find 10 minutes in your day to spend with Jesus, and to spend in His Word, because I guarantee you it will change your relationship with Him no end. And if you manage to do it at the start of the day, it makes life so much easier because you're working from that place of abiding with Jesus and abiding with God. And it means that you look at the day in a different way: you come at it from a far more positive stance, because you're using His resources and you're not working out of your own.

Like I say, I got this Bible for Christmas. It's been so life-giving, just taking time to dig into the Word or spend time meditating it and allowing it to draw me into a deeper relationship with Jesus. I haven't quite braved writing on the pages yet, which is why I've got quite so many Post-it notes in it. But yeah, the Psalms are so life-giving. You just read them and it helps, it gives you life, it makes you breathe, it helps you to just enjoy God's Word.

So that's my thoughts, basically. But I want to point out that there's very little point in attempting to read through the Bible as quickly as possible. The whole point is that this is a way for God to speak to us and to connect with us. And if we're reading just because we're trying to get through it in a year or as quickly as possible, but not giving space for God to speak to us, then we're missing the point. We start to look like the Pharisees: they knew their scripture, and the gospels are littered with them testing Jesus on it. But they weren't open to God speaking to them through it. There's a whole section in John 5. I'd love to read the whole lot to you but we really don't have the time. So go and read John 5, but basically it's Jesus speaking to the Pharisees and telling them that they've read about Him coming in the scriptures, and they say they believe them, but He's stood there in front of them and they don't recognise Him. John 5:39 says<sup>6</sup>,

**39** You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, **40** yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

Or *The Message* puts it this way: it says,

**39-40** “You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you’ll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about *me*! And here I am, standing right before you, and you aren’t willing to receive from me the life you say you want.

If we read our Bibles for the sake of reading our Bibles, we don't meet Jesus in them. We're not seeing the woods for the trees. We need to take time, allow God to speak to us and allow His words to sink in, we need to relish it. And we need to let it breathe life into us.

### ***Discussion: Resources to aid reading the Bible***

I'm going to ask Penny to come back in now so that we can have a bit of a brain dump or brainstorm as to all the different things that you can use to dig into our Bibles so Penny, come in and join us.

[Penny:] Hello.

[Michelle:] Hello lovely.

So Penny, what things have you come across that are really useful for digging into God's Word each day?

[Penny:] Well, you rightly said, that I was reading the Bible in a year. And you rightly said that there's no point rushing through. And I tend to find on busy days, that if I'm trying to keep up on track with reading the Bible in a year, then I am rushing. So sometimes just picking a chapter, and reading through it just a little bit every day – just a bit. And if you only have ten minutes to spend, then just read a short bit and ask God to show you what He wants to show you in it.

[Michelle:] Yeah, yeah. So my mum gave me for Christmas this cool little calendar. And it does like just a verse a day. And I kind of think that even if you can just do a verse a day, like you could focus on it really well or like, Lindsey (bless her, I love Lindsey to pieces). She gives us this calligraphy course on our team Toast group. And she suggested that maybe we could use it to write out really nicely, write a verse out, and I think that we could use that really easily to just focus on one bit and ask God to speak to us whilst we're doing that drawing or colouring, because we all learn in different ways and we all do things different ways, don't we? What else have you come across?

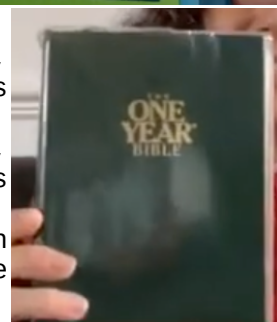
[Penny:] Well I wanted to show you this. This is a book<sup>7</sup> that says, it's an exposition of Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18 to chapter 6 verse 9. It's a whole book on what someone got out of a few verses.

[Michelle:] That's quite a big book as well!

[Penny:] So that's how much can be got out of, you know, that's one person's thoughts of communing with God and this is what they get out of it. But there's so much in there.



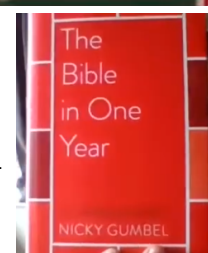
So there are reading the Bible in a year, online and on phones, there are an awful lot of apps you can use. There are all sorts of plans for reading through a certain number of chapters in a year or two years, or Bible in three years or five years. Yeah, and there are some physical things. I mean, I've got here: this is a Bible in a year<sup>8</sup>. Yeah. Someone gave it to me. And you open it and it starts at January the first, and then it goes on and it has something from the Old Testament, something from the New Testament, a Psalm and a Proverb. For every day. It takes quite a while to read it.



[Michelle:] Yeah, yeah. So this is the Nicky Gumbel version<sup>9</sup>.

[Penny:] Right.

[Michelle:] But this is kind of a commentary alongside the scripture, so that's just the commentary of it, it's not the actual Bible readings. You just go and get those for yourself. But then that means that you can read the version that you want, as well.



I went to church the other day, and had a look in the cupboards that there was there, because we've chatted about, you know, people who might not have phones that have got it on. And this is just a very small selection of some of the Bible studies<sup>10</sup> that you can get. And so if anyone wants to borrow any of these from church, we've got absolutely loads of them, but you know



7 Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work by D.M. Lloyd Jones, ISBN 9780851511948

8 The One Year Bible – various translations available, e.g. NLT, NJKV, Living Bible, also [oneyearbibleonline.com](http://oneyearbibleonline.com)

9 The Bible in One Year by Nicky Gumbel, ISBN 9781473677067, journaling edition also available, also online app.

10 Pictured: from the Cover to Cover series, available in Christian book shops and

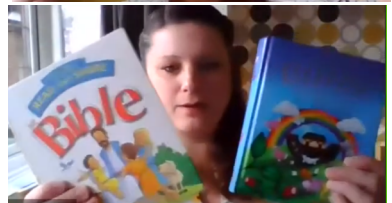
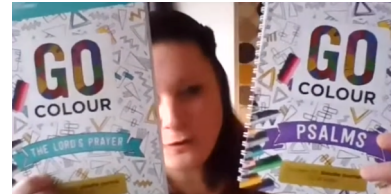


it's all, like, six-week courses or just daily reading stuff that you can do, all different topics all different subjects.

I quite like this one: it looks a bit old-fashioned, but it's all about the Psalms<sup>11</sup>.

Oh and, speaking of which, if you didn't want to do that sort of thing, maybe you're just like maybe you want to do the meditation side of it more, there's little booklets and stuff, it doesn't matter how old you are, because there's these ones for youth as well. So you might be a youth, and these are produced by Youth for Christ<sup>12</sup>, like colouring-in and stuff but they've got activities alongside it.

And just because, like, you're a child, doesn't mean that you can't, like, do Bible-reading stuff, because you get cool Bibles. Like how funky are these? I mean, admittedly these are from when my kids were small. This one's even lost its cover. It's been that battered. But, you know this stuff in here and just because you're an adult it's like you can read the Bible with your kids and you still get so much out of it.



I can't believe the amount of stuff I get out of Youth, like the way that that draws me into my relationship with God, just spending time in the Bible with young people. We forget that we don't have to just sit there quietly, or we don't have to be reading like direct words or whatever else, it's whatever it is, that draws you into God's presence, isn't it?

[Penny:] After Jeremy's dad had a stroke, he found it hard to read, to start with (he ended up being able to read), but for a good while, he would listen to the Bible, or have someone read it to him, and around then I learned that hearing the Bible also helped me to understand it differently. I would pick up different things than if I was reading it. So, either listening to it or having someone read it to you.

[Michelle:] The nice thing about the Bible in a Year app is that you get David Suchet reading it to you too.

Right, we'd better stop because we need to carry on with the rest of our service: we got a bit caught up in our discussion, but yeah so let's pray and then hand over to David and Ruma and Ellie for our prayers.

Father God, thank You for Your Word. Thank You that there are all these different things that we can use. Father, I ask that You would now show each person here, how it is that they're supposed to connect with You, what the best way for them to connect with You is.  
Amen.

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[www.eden.co.uk/cover-to-cover-series/](http://www.eden.co.uk/cover-to-cover-series/)

11 Lifebuilder series: Psalms: Prayers of the Heart by Eugene Peterson. See above ([www.eden.co.uk/Lifebuilder Bible Studies/](http://www.eden.co.uk/Lifebuilder_Bible_Studies/))

12 <https://yfc.co.uk/gocolour/>

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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