In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world, and though the world was made to know the true light, it did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, and his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, he gave the right to become children of God—children born of God through believing in his name.
# CONTENTS

**About this journey**

- A better Bible experience 3
- How it works 3
- The Books of the Bible 4

**Reading the text**

- Five tips for reading 5
- New Testament reading plan 6

**Sharing the journey**

- Five conversation starters 10
- Three tips for weekly gatherings 11

---

**Connect with us**

facebook.com/MakeAndDeepen
ABOUT THIS JOURNEY

A better Bible experience

What would happen if we actually read the Bible? Not a verse here or there, but the whole New Testament?

What if, instead of going it alone, we could have a real conversation about the Bible—one anyone can join, no matter where they are in their faith journey?

Community Bible Experience is about reading the Bible as it was meant to be read—whole books, in community. It will take your church beyond Bible study, beyond reading in fragments, and beyond reading in isolation.

Discover the complete story. For eight weeks, let’s read big, read real, and read together.

How it works

1. **Read big.** You’ll cover the whole New Testament in 8 weeks—reading 5 days a week, around 12 pages a day. The average day’s reading takes 30 minutes or so to complete.

2. **Read real.** You’ll use a groundbreaking presentation of the Scriptures, called *The Books of the Bible*. It’s designed to feel more like reading the original.

3. **Read together.** You’ll meet with your discussion group meet once a week for book club-style conversations about the Bible.
ABOUT THIS JOURNEY

The Books of the Bible

During Community Bible Experience, you’ll read from a revolutionary presentation of Scripture called *The Books of the Bible*.

When you open your copy, the first thing you’ll notice is that this is no ordinary Bible. There are no chapter or verse numbers. No study notes or cross references. No red lettering.

That’s because none of these features are original to the Scriptures. Most were added centuries later to help us find things. But the Bible isn’t a reference book; first and foremost, it’s a story. It’s a collection of books, each of which was meant to be experienced as a whole. Modern Bible formatting imposes a different structure on the text, one that encourages us to read in fragments.

*The Books of the Bible is designed to be read from beginning to end.* We’ve stripped away centuries of artificial formatting, leaving behind nothing but pure Bible text in a presentation that’s easier to read and understand.

We’ve formatted each book so you can see the natural section breaks put there by the authors. We’ve rearranged the books for easier understanding—for example, putting Paul’s letters in a more chronological order (instead of longest to shortest), so you can follow along more easily.

*The Books of the Bible* features the complete text of the New Testament in the NIV®, the most widely read contemporary English translation of the Bible.
READING THE TEXT

Five tips for reading

1. Read what you can.
   Don’t get discouraged if you fall behind. Keep at it, even if you don’t make it all the way through each day’s reading. If you have trouble keeping up, listening to the audio version can help.

2. Read every day.
   Plan on reading five days a week, Monday – Friday. The pace is a little intense, but reading large portions of Scripture is also incredibly rewarding. (And remember, you only have to keep this pace up for eight weeks.)

3. Be fully present.
   Avoid distraction while reading. (Turns out we’re not that good at multitasking.) Instead, devote your full attention to the text.

4. Read the book intros.
   *The Books of the Bible* includes brief introductions or “invitations” to each book, unpacking the context and literary structure of what you’re about to read. Trust us, they’re well worth your time.

5. Don’t worry about the parts you don’t understand.
   The goal is to read big, not to catch every detail. You can always go back and study a specific passage in greater detail later. For now, take in the big picture; let that be your focus for the next eight weeks.

Community Bible Experience

*made the Bible come alive*

in a way I don’t think I’ve ever experienced.

– Gabe Lyons
DURING YOUR JOURNEY

New Testament reading plan
Read five days a week, Monday through Friday. Most readings takes around 30 minutes to complete. Some daily readings are longer or shorter, because each one ends at the close of a book or a natural section break within a book. Section breaks are indicated by line spaces—the bigger the space, the bigger the break.

*Luke consists of a prologue and three main sections which tell the story of Jesus as he ministers in Galilee, journeys to Jerusalem, and lays down his life—only to rise again and become Ruler and Savior of the world.*

Day 1  p. 1–11   read until “...he left him until an opportune time.”
Day 2  p. 11–24  read until “...whoever is not against you is for you.”
Day 3  p. 25–33  read until “...worked all through the dough.”
Day 4  p. 33–42  read until “...and kill them in front of me.”
Day 5  p. 42–54  read until the end of Luke

*Acts (days 6–9) has six parts, each describing a successive phase in the expansion of the church outward from Jerusalem. The apostle Paul’s first two letters, 1 and 2 Thessalonians (day 10), were written to encourage a Christian community facing persecution and to assure them of their coming vindication.*

Day 6  pages 55–64  read until “...priests became obedient to the faith.”
Day 7  pages 64–75  read until “...continued to spread and flourish.”
Day 8  pages 75–86  read until “...spread widely and grew in power.”
Day 9  pages 87–102  read until the end of Acts
Day 10  pages 103–115  read until the end of 2 Thessalonians
DURING YOUR JOURNEY

New Testament reading plan

Week 3: 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans

1 and 2 Corinthians (days 11–13) address a number of problems facing a dysfunctional church in a cosmopolitan city. Paul wrote Galatians (day 14) to refute the claim that Gentile Christians had to observe Jewish customs in order to be saved. In his letter to the Romans (day 15), Paul insists the good news of Jesus is for everyone, Jew and Gentile.

Day 11  pages 117–126  read until “...I too have the spirit of God.”
Day 12  pages 127–138  read until the end of 1 Corinthians
Day 13  pages 139–153  read until the end of 2 Corinthians
Day 14  pages 155–163  read until the end of Galatians
Day 15  pages 165–177  read until “...love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Week 4: Romans, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, Philippians, 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy

The rest of Paul’s letters address various challenges facing churches in different parts of the Roman Empire. These letters, which are presented in the order they were most likely written, also include Paul’s personal correspondence with three individuals: Philemon, Timothy, and Titus.

Day 19  pages 177–188  read until the end of Romans
Day 20  pages 189–195  read until the end of Colossians
Day 21  pages 197–210  read until the end of Philemon
Day 22  pages 211–226  read until the end of 1 Timothy
Day 23  pages 227–238  read until the end of 2 Timothy
DURING YOUR JOURNEY

New Testament reading plan

Week 5: Matthew

Matthew tells the story of Jesus from a distinctly Jewish perspective. This gospel is arranged into five major sections (not unlike the Torah, the first five books of the Jewish Bible). Each section highlights a different theme of Jesus' life and ministry, through a combination of story and teaching.

Day 21  pages 239–251  read until “...and not as their teachers of the law.”
Day 22  pages 251–262  read until “...new treasures as well as old.”
Day 23  pages 262–270  read until “...your brother or sister from your heart.”
Day 24  pages 270–283  read until “...but the righteous to eternal life.”
Day 25  pages 283–290  read until the end of Matthew

Week 6: Hebrews, James, Mark

Like Matthew, the books of Hebrews and James were addressed to predominantly Jewish audiences. Hebrews (days 26–27) is a plea for Jewish believers to stay faithful to the Messiah, while James (day 28) is a collection of practical wisdom, much like the Old (or First) Testament book of Proverbs. Mark’s gospel (days 29–30) presents the story of Jesus as a two-part drama. Each part contains three acts.

Day 26  pages 291–297  read until “...to whom we must give account.”
Day 27  pages 297–309  read until the end of Hebrews
Day 28  pages 311–318  read until the end of James
Day 29  pages 319–334  read until “...not to tell anyone about him.”
Day 30  pages 334–350  read until the end of Mark
DURING YOUR JOURNEY

New Testament reading plan

Week 7: 1–2 Peter, Jude, John

Many believe that Mark (week 6) recorded the memoirs of Peter in his gospel. The next two books (days 31–32) are letters from Peter himself, encouraging believers in what is now Turkey to hold on to their faith and assuring them Jesus will return as promised. Jude’s letter (day 32) has many similarities to 2 Peter. John’s gospel has two main parts: the “Book of Signs” (days 33–34), chronicling seven miracles performed by Jesus, and the “Book of Glory” (day 35), detailing his death and resurrection.

Day 31  pages 351–358  read until the end of 1 Peter
Day 32  pages 359–368  read until the end of Jude
Day 33  pages 369–382  read until “…was later to betray him.”
Day 34  pages 382–395  read until “…what the Father has told me to say.”
Day 35  pages 395–408  read until the end of John

Week 8: 1-3 John, Revelation

John’s first letter emphasizes the importance of believing that Jesus came in the flesh, while his second and third letters instruct churches on how to deal with false teachers and faithful ministers of the gospel, respectively. Revelation is an apocalyptic book meant to encourage persecuted believers to endure to the end.

Day 36  pages 409–423  read until the end of 3 John
Day 37  pages 425–431  read until “…what the Spirit says to the churches.”
Day 38  pages 431–444  read until “…because the plague was so terrible.”
Day 39  pages 444–453  read until the end of Revelation
Day 40  catch-up day
DURING YOUR JOURNEY

Five conversation starters

Each week, participants will share their reflections on the text with their discussion groups, using these five simple prompts:

1. What’s something you noticed for the first time?
2. What questions did you have?
3. Was there anything that bothered you?
4. What did you learn about loving God?
5. What did you learn about loving others?

OK, these are a bit different from your average Bible study questions. Then again, this isn’t your average Bible study.

When you read whole books of the Bible, you may notice things for the first time. You may have questions they never thought to ask before. You may even come across things that trouble them. These discussion prompts are meant to help you navigate the text without giving them all the answers. They’re an invitation to wrestle with the Bible and ponder its implications for how we live.

We’ve seen relationships form that wouldn’t have formed any other way.
People who never wanted to be part of a group—now they don’t want to leave.

– Janine, pastor

Treat your weekly gatherings more like a book club than a Bible study. Allow the conversation to be free-flowing and wide-ranging.
SHARING THE JOURNEY

Three tips for weekly gatherings

If you’ve been part of a Bible study before, you might find these gatherings a bit different. Here are three tips to help you get the most from them.

1. Think “book club.”
   Treat your weekly gatherings more like a book club than a traditional Bible study. The discussions are meant to be free-flowing and wide-ranging.

   You may come to each week’s gathering with lots of specific questions. That’s OK. It’s what happens when you read 12 pages a day! Try to focus your conversation on the big picture—where the overall story is moving and the part we’re invited to play in it. To help, you can suggest your group keeps a “parking lot” list of questions to explore further after your eight-week journey.

2. Honor each participant, wherever they are in their journey.
   It’s likely your fellow readers come from a variety of backgrounds. You may hold different perspectives or assumptions about the Bible. Some of you may be lifelong students of the text; others may be brand new to it. Remember, each person has something meaningful to add to the conversation.

3. Listen actively, speak freely.
   Welcome every voice in the conversation, and don’t hesitate to add your own. You never know how someone else might benefit by hearing what was new or compelling to you, what questions you had, or what you wrestled with.
Community Bible Experience™
Copyright ©2015 by Biblica, Inc.® All rights reserved worldwide.

This guide, along with all other Community Bible Experience materials, is intended for use by churches and other groups participating in Biblica’s Community Bible Experience. Participating groups may copy and distribute this guide for the sole purpose of their Community Bible Experience campaign. Use for any other purpose is prohibited without the express written permission of Biblica.

Questions about Covenant Community Bible Experience? Contact us at mdd@covchurch.org.

CovChurch.org/CBE