



Connections

1 Timothy 3:16-17 *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

Where to begin reading the Bible? It is a simple question and answer. If all of God’s word is valuable as the verses above states, then you can begin anywhere. Hold on a minute before you open the book of Daniel! Reading the Levitical laws or lists of genealogy might not be the best place to start. I am a firm believer that you cannot just offer Jesus without context. What happens is that down the road new believers gain assumptions about the Christ. He is the savior of what? Why did He have to die? What makes Jesus different than Buddha or Mohamed? We could even go farther and ask why do we say one God but three persons? It is important to get new believers on a good path. A path that leads towards a greater understanding of the Bible.

I have repeated it several times in the last 4 studies: the Old and New Testaments are connected. Jesus is Jewish and Hebrew. That heritage plays itself out in the New Testament. The Levitical sacrifices play a role in Jesus’ death. The Holy Spirit was there in the beginning. The line of David and Abraham are important to the line of Jesus. Sometimes it is as simple as symbolism between the Ark of Noah and water Baptism. To Some, Jesus is called the new Moses. The whole Bible must be read and understood to see the whole story being played out.

With all that said I would suggest that you begin reading in the book of Matthew because the Bible scholars (in their wisdom) put it first. How to capture your reader 101. Do not start with a genealogy list. Yet, Matthew begins this way. So, why begin there? It is because of connections. Matthew is connecting Jesus to the Old Testament. What it is saying to you is that this list means something. A new believer is not supposed to understand. Yet, you will in time. The list will make sense. I would also say that Matthew is a Jewish book. He wants to connect all the books together. It makes the Jesus story come alive. Why? It is because there is a reason God predicted a Christ would save us. Jesus checks all those boxes.

The Bible is a workbook. We are to read it, yet we should mark it up. Where is Matthew mentioning the Old Testament or its characters? I have been on a journey of highlighting the name of God. I also highlight major scripture and verses that inspired me. I have another Bible that I marked references to other scripture. When we read our Bible, it should be for spiritual enjoyment. Yet, sometimes we need to be a student taking a course on God.

Most Bibles have some sort of side appendix. This appendix gives you other scripture that pertains to many verses. Sometimes it is in the back of the Bible while most of the time it is listed in the middle of the page. I love the NIV student Bible because Phillip Yancy walks you through the scripture. He is not inspired work but he was inspired to help you understand what you are reading.

J Vernon McGee has a radio program called "Thru the Bible." It is a five-year study. He spends a ton of time connecting the Old and New Testament together. He tends to flip back and forth reading one book in each Testament. It takes five years! Do not read every book in a day (as if you could). It should take years to read the Bible. In my Christian beginning, I was so on fire for God that I read the whole thing in 6 months. Yet, what did I really learn. Take your time

reading one chapter a day. Highlight a verse or a word in each chapter. Write notes in the margin if you want. It is not a race but a feeding of the word to your soul.

Some people will try and separate Jesus from God the Father. One version of God is loving and the other is angry. It is a myth. They are the same God. Yet, how can you know? That is why we read the whole Bible. Flip back and forth reading a book in each. Yet, notice what the New Testament writers are saying about old scripture. Remember that is all they knew. They saw the connections. They want their readers to see them too. Jesus gets angry. So does God the Father. Yet, God the Father and Jesus are loving and compassionate. Why do we need to see this in the Bible? It is because to be Christian is to see Jesus connected to the Father and the Spirit. They are one God in three persons called the Trinity.

The final connection you need to see is the Trinity. Although this word is not used in the Bible it is there all over the place. The connections start in the 2nd verse of the Bible *“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”* John places Jesus in the beginning too *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* Finally, Jesus makes a connection between all three in Matthew 28:19 *“therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

Everything must be seen through the lens of the trinity. What is the role of the Father, Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit? Highlight all the places where God, Lord, Spirit, and Jesus are mentioned. See that they are the story. The connections are there. Jesus is the Christ. The Holy Spirit is all over the Old and New Testaments. God the Father is weaved throughout the Bible narrative. You say that you are saved and now a Christ follower. Let the Bible tell you why, how,

and for what purpose. Finally, after reading Matthew, go and read Genesis. Read how it all began. Begin the real journey.