

7 KEY TIPS FOR BUILDING A GOOD FOUNDATION WITH THE BIBLE

START WITH PRAYER! Ask God to help you understand what you're reading and to hear him speak.

1. Don't read the Bible from start to finish like a novel.

If you're new to it, start with the bits that you can get on with – for example one of the gospels (stories of Jesus' life: Matthew, Mark, Luke or John in the New Testament). But don't shy away from the harder books in the long term.

2. Understand the historical context in which the Bible is written.

Even the newest bits are over 2,000 years old. Start asking yourself what it might have been like when the books were written and use the internet or books to look for answers.

3. Don't read passages entirely on their own, look at what comes before and after them.

It's easy to take verses, or sometimes whole stories, out of context, by reading them by themselves. Try to work out where they fit in the bigger story or argument of the book.

4. Use different translations.

There are lots and lots of different translations. Look for the one you like best. It's often a good idea to have a very literal translation (like the NRSV) and one that's in easy-to-read modern English (like the NIV). The differences between them will get you thinking.

5. Read what's actually there, not what you think might be there.

Slow down and chew it over. Perhaps try Lectio Divina if you haven't before.

6. Read the Bible with other people, use notes or commentaries.

There are lots out there including many apps you can download on the phone.

7. Finally, don't beat yourself up if you're struggling! Try something different to keep it fresh.