

## Tips on taking in and remembering Bible content

A good practice guide on engaging with the Bible

By Aurora Betony



July 2017

A version of this guide is available in electronic copy at  
<https://inclusive-church.org/news/top-tips-engaging-bible>

## Introduction



I am dyslexic. So I need to approach the Bible in ways that take my dyslexia into account. These ways may be useful for anyone who finds reading difficult and everyone else too. So I'd like to share them with you in this guide. I hope they will help you to find an approach that works for you.

### What does this guide do?

This guide explains how the following help me to engage with the Bible.

- 1) A translation or paraphrase in contemporary language
- 2) A multi-sensory approach
- 3) An interactive approach
- 4) Gradually building my learning of each passage in small steps
- 5) 'Overlearning' Bible content
- 6) A flexible approach
- 7) An approach that is realistic for me

### Who is this guide aimed at?

- 1) Everyone, because it shares good practice. I think it will be particularly useful for anyone who finds reading difficult or has learning difficulties
- 2) Most of the resources featured in this guide are for adults. I have also included a few that are aimed at children because I find them useful
- 3) This guide can be used on a self-help basis, or by anyone who wishes to support others to engage with the Bible

### How is this guide accessible?

- 1) It is written in a dyslexia-friendly style and design
- 2) It is illustrated throughout with colourful images
- 3) It has embedded hyperlinks (underlined text) which let you access resources directly. You don't have to read them to understand the guide

## Things I do to help myself engage with the Bible

1) I use a **translation or paraphrase in contemporary language**



I recommend

- a) The Contemporary English Version (CEV)<sup>1</sup>
- b) Mr BibleHead blog<sup>2</sup>
- c) 'The New Testament for Everyone'<sup>3</sup>

2) I use a **multi-sensory approach**

As well as print format, I also use audio, visual, drama and music.

For example



**Audio**

- a) 'You've got the time'<sup>4</sup>
- b) 'PodBible'<sup>5</sup>
- c) 'The Message'<sup>6</sup>



**Illustration**

- a) The Lion Graphic Bible<sup>7</sup>
- b) The Good News Bible Colour Reference edition<sup>8</sup>
- c) 'Free Bible images' website<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/products/bibles/english-bibles/cev>

<sup>2</sup> <http://mrbiblehead.blogspot.co.uk>

<sup>3</sup> By Tom Wright. ISBN 978-0281064267

<sup>4</sup> <https://soundcloud.com/biblesociety/sets/youve-got-the-time>

<sup>5</sup> <http://podbible.com>

<sup>6</sup> On Bible Gateway at <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Message-MSG-Bible/#booklist> - open the chapter you want to listen to and click on the audio icon

<sup>7</sup> By Jeff Anderson and Mike Maddox ISBN 978-0745949239

<sup>8</sup> Paperback ISBN 0564 00821 4. Hardback ISBN 0564 00831 1



## Film

- a) 'The Bible' TV mini-series<sup>10</sup> (2013)
- b) 'Jesus' film<sup>11</sup> (1979)
- c) 'The Pitch' films<sup>12</sup>
- d) 'Lifekids' animations<sup>13</sup>
- e) Channel 4's 'Stop Look Listen' Animated Bible Stories<sup>14</sup>



## Musical settings

- a) Handel's 'Messiah', Mendelssohn's 'Elijah', Schubert's Psalm 23
- b) Michael Hurd's 'pop' cantatas for children
- c) 'Songs & Hymns of Fellowship'<sup>15</sup>

### 3) I use an **interactive approach**

#### a) I make my **reading / listening active**



Active reading or listening is when you read or listen with the aim of answering certain questions. I find the following questions really helpful:

- What does this chapter say about God?
- What does this chapter say about people?
- How should we respond to this chapter?

---

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.freebibleimages.org>

<sup>10</sup> <http://bibleseriesresources.com>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.jesustfilm.org/film-and-media/watch-the-film>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.enterthepitch.com>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.life.church/watch/early-childhood> Aimed at children. I find them helpful because they are very clear and vivid.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/stop-look-listen-animated-bible-stories> Aimed at children. I find them helpful because they are very clear and vivid.

<sup>15</sup> Integrated Music Edition. ISBN 0 86065 528 8. Includes a scripture index.

## b) I recreate Bible content

For example

- I **retell a chapter in my own words**

I revisit the chapter as often as I need until I can recount the whole chapter without looking at the text. I've also done this in a group, where each person contributes whichever bit of the story they like.

- I **set a story to music**, as a hymn or song

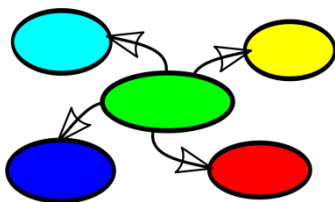
- I **dramatize** Bible content

- I go into role

For example as Job, I paraphrase the chapter I've just read or discuss it with Eliphaz, Bildad or Zophar.

- I 'act out' a chapter

It is entirely up to you whether you try the following technique as it won't appeal to everyone. However, in private Bible study, I find it helpful to use something to represent each character (or group of characters) as I act out the story. For example, sand animals, paper cut-outs, pens, wooden spoons, stones.



- I **create a visual presentation of Bible content**

I draw a timeline, spider diagram or annotated family tree.

## c) I study the Bible with others



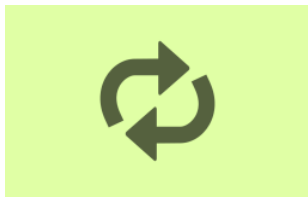
Hearing other people's responses to a Bible story adds to my own understanding. Discussing Bible content also makes it concrete and therefore more memorable for me. Recently, I gave a short Bible reflection to a group. I rehearsed what I was going to say many times, over the course of 2 weeks. So by the time I gave the talk, I knew the story well.

4) I **gradually build my learning** of each passage **in small steps**



I start by gaining the gist of the passage before reading it in print. I do this by using other formats (see section 2 above), or summaries such as 'Psalms for young children'<sup>16</sup> and The Lion Storyteller Book of Parables<sup>17</sup>.

5) I **'overlearn'** Bible content



I re-expose myself to each passage many times, using different formats. For example, I create a comic strip, using pictures from <http://www.freebibleimages.org> and text from [Bible Gateway](#)<sup>18</sup>. Then I listen to the passage using ['You've got the Time'](#)<sup>19</sup>, and following the pictures.

6) I use a **flexible approach**

I adapt my approach for each chapter as required.

7) I use **an approach that is realistic for me**

For example with chapters I find particularly difficult, I limit my objectives by identifying one thing that stands out for me.

---

<sup>16</sup> By Mari-Hélène Delval and Arno ISBN 978-0802853226

<sup>17</sup> By Bob Hartman and Krisztina Kállai Nagy ISBN 978 -0745964461. Also aimed at children.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com>

<sup>19</sup> <https://soundcloud.com/biblesociety/sets/youve-got-the-time>

## Further information

- 1) [‘Engaging with the Bible: versions, approaches and strategies’](#)<sup>20</sup>
- 2) ‘Ways of studying the Bible’ Study Day Worksheet<sup>21</sup>
- 3) [‘7 top tips for reading the Bible’](#)<sup>22</sup>

## 3 steps you can take to start developing your own approach

- 1) Download a copy of this guide from  
<https://inclusive-church.org/news/top-tips-engaging-bible>
- 2) Mark with a highlighter the things that work for you
- 3) As you go along, record anything that you think might help you e.g.
  - a) Any ways you adapt the ideas in this guide
  - b) Your own and other people’s ideas e.g. resources, strategies
  - c) Which approaches you find useful for certain bits of the Bible e.g. Psalm 119, Mark 2 verses 1-12, the Book of JobYou can use this space to start your notes:

## Please feel free to share your own tips on engaging with the Bible

- via Inclusive Church's social media. See <https://inclusive-church.org>.

Aurora Betony is a dyslexic adult who creates self-help resources for dyslexic adults.

© Aurora Betony. This article may be reproduced with due attribution of authorship.

---

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.unitedbiblesocieties.org/can-help-dyslexic-people-engage-bible>

<sup>21</sup> Page 11 from ‘Getting to Grips with the Bible - Tutor Guideline’  
<http://urcshop.co.uk/training/tls-lite-publications/getting-to-grips-with-the-bible-tutor-guideline>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/articles-about-the-bible/7-top-tips-for-reading-the-bible>