

During my career as a professor, international speaker, and professional development consultant, highly ambitious students, postdocs, and working professionals frequently asked my advice on what they should read to improve themselves personally and professionally. In addition to the reading material I recommended to fit their specific needs and career paths, I always recommended reading the Bible because genuine success in this life and the next is **impossible** without a deep and accurate understanding of it.

**My advice:** Read the Bible (in its entirety), in a modern, reliable translation that you can understand. The Bible has been read by more people throughout history than any other book, and has influenced people, nations, and cultures in more positive ways than any other book, as well. Success in life is impossible without a deep and accurate understanding of the Christian Bible (i.e., 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books), for it tells us essential truths about all that exists, which can never be found elsewhere.

**Description of the Bible:** The Bible is compilation of 66 books, written by roughly 40 different authors, in three languages, over a period of about 1,600 years. It communicates a progressive revelation of reality by God, through a select number of divinely inspired authors, in order that people might know their Creator and vital truths about themselves, the universe, and God's divine purposes for everything.

## What the Bible says about itself

**2 Timothy 3:16-17** (NIV) <sup>16</sup> *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,* <sup>17</sup> *so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

**Hebrews 4:12** (ESV) *...the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

## Advantages of reading, understanding, and aligning ourselves with Biblical teachings

**Joshua 1:8** (ESV) *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

**Psalms 1:1-3** (ESV) <sup>1</sup> *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;* <sup>2</sup> *but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.* <sup>3</sup> *He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

**Psalms 119:97-105** (ESV) <sup>97</sup> *Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.* <sup>98</sup> *Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.* <sup>99</sup> *I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.* <sup>100</sup> *I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.* <sup>101</sup> *I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.* <sup>102</sup> *I do not turn aside from your rules, for you have taught me.* <sup>103</sup> *How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!* <sup>104</sup> *Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.* <sup>105</sup> *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

## Caution about adding new ideas to the Bible or distorting its intended meaning

**Psalms 30:5-6** (ESV) <sup>5</sup> *Every word of God proves true...* <sup>6</sup> *Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.*

**2 Peter 3:16** (NIV) *...[Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

**Matthew 22:29** (ESV) *But Jesus answered them, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.*