



Finding the ROAD to Jesus

A Guide to Christ-Centered Bible Reading

Tell me if this sounds familiar. The year begins, and you decide this will be the year you finally read the Bible consistently. You find a plan, start strong, and imagine how different life will look by December.

January goes great. Genesis feels rich. Exodus is okay. But then you hit Leviticus, and the momentum fades. You hit passages that leave you wondering what you're supposed to get out of them. How are Israel's failures, the long list of laws on uncleanness, or the pages and pages of tabernacle instructions meant to nourish your soul?

Before long, doubt creeps in. Am I getting anything out of this? Am I doing it right? Some days you struggle to find a takeaway. Other days you can't remember what you read. You're glad you're reading, but it doesn't feel life-giving. Slowly but surely, Bible reading slips back into the category of duty—something you do because you should, not because you delight in it.

So what's missing?

The issue is usually not the plan, discipline, or commitment. The deeper problem is motive. What if our reasons for reading the Bible are actually keeping us from enjoying it?

Motives matter because they shape expectations. So why do we read the Bible? Here's a few reasons we typically give: because we know we should, because we want guidance, comfort, strength, or wisdom. These are great motives—but none of them are ultimate. *Ultimately*, we should read to see Jesus.

How exactly is Leviticus supposed to comfort me? How do the Bible's genealogies strengthen my faith? How do Israel's failures guide my daily decisions? How are the stories of Israel's idolatrous kings supposed to bring me hope?

The answer is simple: every one of these passages point to Jesus. Without him, God's will remains unclear, comfort remains shallow, faith remains fragile, and God's promises remain unfulfilled. Reading the Bible without seeing how it leads to Christ is like trying to read in the dark. It's only in the light of Jesus that Scripture becomes truly life-giving.



The problem is that most of us were never taught to read this way. Most of us were taught to read primarily for application. Read the text, make observations, find a takeaway, and try harder next time. It's not that the method was wrong—but it's missing something essential.

Over time, that method of Bible reading leaves us with long lists of applications from our devotions, but our lists are void of the power to bring lasting change. Scripture becomes instruction without transformation.

The Bible is clear about how real change happens. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3 that we are transformed by beholding the glory of the Lord. As we see Jesus revealed in Scripture, the Spirit changes us from the inside out.

Application still matters—but it must flow from adoration. We don't read first to fix ourselves. We read to see Jesus. And seeing him is what transforms duty into delight. That's the shift—from famine to feast. And learning to make that shift is the goal of the pages that follow.

What's At Stake?

What's at stake if we don't learn to read the Bible in a way that actually leads us to Jesus? What if we settle for a habit of reading that produces more notes, more observations, and more applications—but no encounter with the living Christ?

According to Jesus, the cost is devastating.

In John 5, Jesus delivers one of His strongest rebukes, and it isn't aimed at skeptics or irreligious people. It's aimed at Bible readers. That alone should stop us in our tracks. Jesus rebukes people who loved the Scriptures. The Pharisees were Scripture experts—men who memorized vast portions of the Bible, debated it constantly, and devoted their lives to mastering it. And yet, despite all of that, they missed Jesus. And in missing Jesus, they missed life.

Jesus tells them: “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life” (John 5:39–40).

Notice what Jesus does—and does not—rebuke. He does not criticize the Pharisees for coming to the Scriptures in search of life. If anything, He affirms that instinct. The rebuke comes because they read the Scriptures without seeing that they testify to the life found only in Him.



They approached the Bible as a life-giving book, rather than as a book that points to a life-giving Savior.

The warning is sobering: it is possible to read the Bible carefully, faithfully, even passionately—and still miss the very One it is written to reveal.

The ultimate goal of the Bible is to help us see Jesus. Yes, its history and grammar matter. Yes, its theology matters—deeply. Yes, its commands and applications matter. But none of these are ends in themselves. Everything Scripture gives us—its narratives, doctrines, and imperatives—points us to our need for Christ. The Bible’s aim is not merely information or instruction, but enjoyment of Jesus.

The Four Movements of Christ-Centered Reading

Seeing Jesus means recognizing how every text reveals something about his person, his work, his promises, or the salvation he brings. Reading the Bible to see Jesus isn’t about forcing him into the text. It’s about following the path the divine Author laid down through the human author. And that path always runs through the basic rules of interpretation—not around them. Our goal, no matter what passage we are reading, is to find the **ROAD** to Jesus.

Read | Get to Know the Passage

Because the Bible is the written Word of God, careful interpretation begins with careful reading. Scripture comes to us through words—nouns, verbs, phrases, prepositions, history, and culture. That means any Christ-centered Bible study must begin by paying close attention to the text itself.

Whether you’re reading slowly through a single book or following a Bible reading plan, it helps to read each passage at least twice. The goal is not speed, but attention. Slow down. Let the passage become familiar before trying to explain it.

Marking up the text can help you read attentively. Circle important names and places. Underline repeated words or phrases. Highlight commands, contrasts, images, or anything that stands out. Mark questions where the meaning feels unclear and note “aha” moments where something catches your attention.



Observe | What is the author saying?

Once you've read the text carefully, begin examining what the passage is communicating. Reading helps you gather the pieces; observation helps you see how they fit together.

Our goal is not to invent meaning, but to discover it—to uncover what the author has already placed in the text. In observation, we are trying to discern the author's intended meaning, not importing our own ideas into Scripture.

Start by observing **the details**:

- Are there key words or phrases the author repeats?
- Who are the key people in the passage?
- Are there commands, promises, warnings, questions, or images?
- What stands out as surprising, confusing, or important?

Then observe **the structure**:

- How does the passage begin and end?
- Are there movements, contrasts, comparisons, or turning points?
- Is there a problem and resolution?
- Is there a command followed by a reason?
- How do the details fit together?

Then observe **the context**:

- What comes before and after this passage?
- How does the surrounding context shape the meaning?
- What genre am I reading, and how should that affect interpretation?
- How does this passage contribute to the larger message of the book?

When you're done, summarize the passage in one sentence by answering: What did I just read, and what is the author saying?

Individual details matter, but meaning emerges when we see how those details work together to communicate one clear message.

Anchor to Christ | How does it point us to Jesus?

Once we've understood the author's message, how it connects to the larger context of the book, and how it contributes to the greater story of redemption, we're ready to consider how it points



us to Jesus. Jesus is not an afterthought. He is the destination the author—human and divine—has been steering us toward all along. He’s what the text is ultimately about.

Discovering the Jesus connection in a text is not about simply tacking on how the text leads us to justification by faith or making some random, indirect connection to the gospel. It’s about tracing the author’s own logic until we see how his message naturally anticipates, reveals, or requires Christ. When we follow the author’s meaning all the way to its end, we discover that the end is a person—and that person is Jesus.

There are six roads to Jesus to be looking for:

- **Problems:** What problem does this passage expose that only Jesus can ultimately solve? (Sin, failure, injustice, death, weak leaders, exile, brokenness)
- **Promises:** What promise does this passage make that finds its fulfillment in Jesus? (Explicit prophecy, future hope, expectations of the Messiah’s Kingdom)
- **Pictures:** What person, place, or thing in this passage previews or foreshadows Jesus? (Kings, priests, sacrifices, temples, deliverers)
- **Patterns:** Are there any repeated movements or patterns that prepare us for Jesus? (Suffering then glory, exile then restoration, exodus-like salvation, the humble being exalted and the self-exalting being humbled)
- **Paradoxes:** What tension in this passage cannot be resolved apart from Jesus? (God claiming to just and show mercy, the servant who suffers and yet is victorious, the tension between law and grace, hope in death and life)
- **Produce:** What does this passage call for that exposes our need for Jesus’s grace to obey? (Commands, imperatives, wisdom, holiness that we cannot produce on our own)

Some passages lay out a bright yellow-brick road to Jesus—clear, unmistakable, and practically marked with a neon sign: “This Way to Christ.” Most passages aren’t like that. Their pathways are subtler. They take more patience to trace, and sometimes the trail you think is a path turns fuzzy, raising questions that make you wonder if you’re forcing the connection.

Whenever we come to a text in which the pathway to Jesus is not clear, we need to reaffirm our commitment to the truth that every passage really does point to him. The question is never *if* a text gets us to Jesus, but *how*.

Charles Spurgeon once captured this beautifully: “Do you not know that from every little town and village and tiny hamlet in England there is a road leading to London? Whenever I get hold of a text, I say to myself, ‘There is a road from here to Jesus Christ, and I mean to keep on His track till I get to Him.’”¹

¹ Charles Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*.



Just as every town in England has a road to London, every passage of Scripture has a ROAD to Jesus. Our task is simply to read faithfully until we find it.

Depend & Do | What's my next step?

Now that you've seen what the text says, observed the author's meaning, and considered how it points you to Jesus, you're ready to move toward application. Application that skips Christ tends toward moralism. What we want instead is Christ-informed obedience—application that flows naturally from the text because it flows first through Jesus.

Our hope is not in applying the Bible perfectly. Our hope is in the perfect Deliverer to whom the Bible points. It is by seeing him that we are transformed, and it is out of that transformation that obedience becomes possible.

So rather than asking, What should I do? ask: In light of who Jesus is and what he has done, what is my next step?

Looking for application by first looking to Jesus reminds us that obedience does not come from us alone. It comes from Christ at work within us, “both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

Once your next step is clear, pray. You have no hope of obeying apart from God's Spirit. So before you act, depend—and depend as you act.

The Bible as a Meeting Place

The Bible is far more than a book. It is a meeting place—a holy space where we are invited to encounter and enjoy Jesus Christ himself. When we come to Scripture chasing any meaning that does not find its fulfillment in him, we risk missing the very One the Scriptures were written to reveal.

The Pharisees knew the Book but missed the Person. May it never be so with us. When we open the Bible, let us come seeking Christ—the source of life. May our reading become communion, as every page draws our hearts toward the One to whom the whole story points.

Jesus-centered reading does more than help us understand Scripture; it trains us to savor the Savior in everyday life. It is one of the ways we “taste and see” the goodness of the Lord. God



has given us the Bible as a map to enjoyment in Jesus. As we walk its pathways toward him, we discover that the One we seek has been walking toward us all along—on every page.