

Jesus said, “It is written...” But Who Is Reading It?

By Rich Cleveland

*Have you ever wondered
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The phrase “it is written” is used over one hundred times in the Bible. In better than half of those occasions it is Jesus who is validating some truth or event in his life by reminding the listeners that God spoke about these things previously in the Old Testament. Perhaps the most notable one is Matthew 4:4 where Jesus combats the Devil by reminding him of what was written, “But he answered, ‘It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God;’” validating with his words, and with his example how important it is to know and to align ourselves with what “is written.” Perhaps in our days of high-technology, and ready access to all kinds of online information, both good and bad, we have minimized the value of just sitting and reading holy Scripture daily.

So, as we enter the third month of 2025, and the beginning of Lent, I would ask you:

- How are you doing reading the Bible consistently?
- Of the seventy-three books in the Holy Bible, how many did you read in 2024?
- Have you ever read all seventy-three books of the Bible?
- What book of the Bible are you currently reading?

Do you realize that Jesus assumed that those listening to him had read of, and were aware, of the people and occasions he mentioned from the Old Testament books? Have you ever wondered why God had these events recorded, and why he ensured out of all the books in the world that these were to be preserved? Or why God ensured that the life of his Son, and the beginnings of his Church were written, and so meticulously preserved? It makes one pause

and think that maybe God intended them to be read, and lived.

There are two basic reasons why we ought to desire reading God’s Word, both initially, and then re-reading it again and again. The first reason can be

introduced by the picture on the right, which we took in Sienna, Italy. This tiny door in the wall is on a founding hospital, where in century’s past women who for some reason felt that they could not care for their infant, could anonymously leave their

infant in a niche like this, with a revolving shelf. When they closed the door, and rang the bell which was provided, someone, usually a nun, would retrieve the infant from the niche and care for and raise the child. As these children grew to become adults, they grew without any ancestral history; no parents, no family, no grandparents, no relatives, no history of what their ancestors did, nor where their physical looks, traits, or characteristics may have come from, and consequently—they often also matured with a deep void in their hearts.

In a similar way, when we fail to invest time reading the Bible we are choosing, unlike the babies who had no choice, to disconnect ourselves from our ancestors’ spiritual history. We make a decision, consciously or subconsciously, to



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ignore God’s detailed recollection of his involvement with our spiritual ancestors; what they did and said, and the life lessons they learned. A history that Saint Paul reminds the early Christians, and us, “whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

The second reason **God intended them to be read**, is that in the written Word of God we encounter Jesus the Living Word of God in a way not dissimilar to how we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist; alive and present to us: “In order to reveal himself to men, in the condescension of his goodness God speaks to them in human words... For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord’s Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God’s Word and Christ’s Body... **In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, ‘but as what it really is, the word of God.’**”¹ (Emphasis added.)

Amazing! God really comes to meet us in Scripture. For me this happened in 1960 when as a non-Christian, I decided at twenty years of age, it was time for me to have at least read through the Holy Bible, even if I was unaffiliated with any Christian church. Laying silently on my barracks cot each night, I began reading the Bible starting in Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, with a goal of reading three chapters a day until I finished the whole Bible. I struggled through the seemingly dryness of Leviticus, and later with the difficulties of the prophetic books, but plodded forward reading each day—then I awakened to new life in the midst of reading the four gospel books. I found myself underlining portions that stood out to me, eventually finding that I was underlining entire blocks of Scripture. Looking back, I now realize that I had encountered Christ during those 14 months of reading, and that reading the Bible is priceless. I am so thankful that the journey brought me into relationship with Jesus the Christ.

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, was undoubtedly the most influential Catholic priest in the United States during the middle decades of the twentieth century. In 1928 he successfully entered upon an electronic ministry, first on radio,

and later, on prime-time television. At the beginning of his young priesthood, he vowed to spend one “holy” hour before the Lord in the tabernacle every day, and not only did so, but taught many retreats for Catholic priest and laymen encouraging them to make a similar commitment. (Mathematically I estimated that he spent 2.5 years before the Lord, while keeping his Holy Hour commitment.)

Bishop Sheen, also taught similar retreats for Protestant ministers emphasizing this same concept of spending a holy-hour with Jesus, many of whom began this daily hour devotion. He told them, “You are not blessed with the same Divine Presence in your churches that I believe we possess. But you do have another presence that we do also, and that is the Scripture.”² What a gift Bishop Sheen gave them by calling them to remember that the foundational purpose of the Bible is to encounter Jesus who is alive and present there.

To some this *every day* act of devotional reading may seem legalistic. But legalism seems to come into existence when we endeavor to hold to the letter of the law in order to make ourselves feel righteous before God. However, having a daily commitment to read Scripture and pray is not done to attain righteousness, but to celebrate the righteousness we already have in Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30) by communing with him, the Living Word. This is the way Pope Benedict XVI expressed it: “The Christian life is essentially marked by an *encounter with Jesus Christ*, who calls us to follow him. ...where a personal and communal journey *based on the word of God can occur* and truly serve as the basis for our spiritual life. ...I express my heartfelt hope for the flowering of a ‘new season of greater love for the sacred Scripture on the part of every member of the People of God, so that their prayerful and faith-filled reading of the Bible will, with time, deepen their personal relationship with Jesus.’”³

God intended them to be read, now it is time for us to make it our intention to be one of those who reads the Scriptures daily. It does not have to be for an hour every day, but consistency does help, as does knowing in advance the quiet place where you will read, and when. Be faithful and it will become a highlight of your life and a source of wisdom and insight.

After thirty-five years as evangelicals, Rich Cleveland and his wife Gail became Catholic. Rich is the founder of Emmaus Journey, and he and his wife continue to serve Emmaus Journey, and live in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, portions of 101–103.

² *Treasure in Clay*, by Fulton J. Sheen, reprint published by Ignatius Press 1992.

³ *The Word of the Lord* (Verbum Domini), by Pope Benedict XVI, USCCB 2010, paragraph 72.

If God felt it was important enough to give us such an extensive written record about everything in life, it seems the least we can do is give some time to reading it.

From the Heart By Mike Dill

No Excuses

If anyone had an excuse for NOT reading the Bible it was me. When I was a young woman (twenty years old) I taught a kindergarten class. During that same year I went for an annual vision check-up. When the doctor learned that I was teaching a kindergarten class he said “Here let me show you a test that is good to do on kindergarteners.”

He showed me how to do the test by having me take it — which consisted of lacing the fingers of my hands at arm’s length, making an opening through which I could look at him. Then by closing one of his eyes he could determine which was the dominant eye I used. Each time I did the test, he would say “Now wait a minute, do that again.” Soon he said “Well you have the condition we would be looking for in the children.” Then he asked, “You don’t enjoy just sitting down and reading a good book, do you?” “No,” I had to answer honestly. He explained that this lack of reading enjoyment, can be caused by “cross dominance” — being right-handed and left eyed or the opposite. It doesn’t affect a person’s ability to read, or their comprehension, it just makes reading more of an effort.

When I first started following Christ and trying to let Him control my life, I was fortunate enough to have a friend who mentored me in the faith. Joyce was a little older than I, and had some knowledge about how to help me become a disciple of Jesus. She especially encouraged me to read God’s Word daily. Now since I wasn’t much of a reader, I was hesitant to take on reading such a thick book, but I decided I would give reading the Bible a try. Like everyone else there were times I did not understand parts of the Bible at all, but I didn’t let that deter me. Consequently, I developed the habit of daily (most days) spending time just reading God’s Word. That was one of the things in my life that I knew had become different about me now that I had given my life to Christ, I loved reading His Word and did it faithfully. Initially, I used to read the Bible from cover-to-cover reading one translation, and then selecting a different translation I would go through it again. I do not try to read through the entire Bible in a year, or follow a specific program of reading, I just read leisurely and let God teach me about Himself and about life. If God felt it was important enough to give us such an extensive written record about everything in life, it seems the least we can do is give some time to reading it.

It was so refreshing when we first encountered Catholicism to see how the Church honored the Scripture; elevating it in the processional, reading four portions during the liturgy, again elevating the Gospel and standing for the Gospel reading, and making the sign of the cross on our head, lips, and heart. Through these many non-verbal ways, the Church was saying “**Take note: Scripture is important to us.**” Like the early church in Acts 17:11 they were “examining the Scripture daily.” So thankful.

After all my years of daily reading the Bible, over sixty years, parts of the Bible are very familiar to me. However, I usually don’t just skim these very well-known parts, but I re-read them. It is amazing how often God, in his Word, shows me some new insight about life — in those old familiar passages. Hebrews 4:12 says God’s Word is “living and active” therefore it never gets old and boring.



Gail Cleveland

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From the Heart

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There are so many ways God has taught me through His Word; about how I should walk with Him, about being a wife, about being a mother, about being a woman. These ways are *often* very different from what the world is telling us. But without fail, when His Word is applied to our life situations, the divine principles in His Word become the solutions we need. From my experience, I would encourage you to read and re-read God's Word and you too will find that he will continually teach and lead you.

Gail Cleveland has co-labored with Rich in founding Emmaus Journey. She has devoted hours to reading and editing almost every article of SaintsAlive!. She is the mother of three married sons, and grandmother of eight adult grandchildren. Together Rich and Gail are members of Holy Apostles Catholic Church.

Tools You Can Use

The Words of the Risen Christ

A Bible Study on Jesus' Resurrection

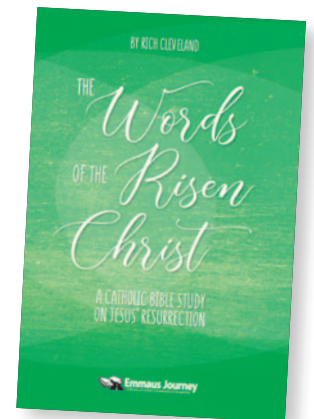
Jesus' final words after His resurrection, such as "Go make disciples" and "Peace be with you," set the tone for each of the eight sessions of this Bible study. They help participants explore themes such as community, reconciliation, the power of the Holy Spirit and the call to evangelization.

The Words of the Risen Christ will enable you and your small groups to enter into the hearts and minds of the disciples as they joyfully discover that Jesus is not dead but has risen.

The Words of the Risen Christ consists of eight enlightening sessions:

- Session 1 — That the world may know ...
- Session 2 — "Was it not necessary ...?"
- Session 3 — "Peace be with you."
- Session 4 — "Do not be faithless, but believing."
- Session 5 — "Come and have breakfast."
- Session 6 — "Do you love me?"
- Session 7 — "I send the promise of my Father upon you."
- Session 8 — "Go and make disciples of all nations."

Written as a follow-up study to *The Seven Last Words of Christ*, participants of this study will resonate with the disciples as they come to grips with their disappointments and shortcomings. And they will also exult with these same disciples when they experience Jesus' love, forgiveness, and companionship.



*"I am thrilled that God is
doing this work through
you, using these Bible
studies and others has
helped me grow in my
Catholic faith."*

—55-year old Woman

BUY NOW

Fr. Ignatius John Schweitzer, OP



*Each specific scapular
has a different history
and unique devotion.*

Emmaus Journey is happy to introduce to you Fr. Ignatius who has graciously agreed to become the chaplain and spiritual advisor for Emmaus Journey. As you know Emmaus Journey was born out of a desire to encourage and enable Catholics to become more directly involved with Scripture; to draw them into the living word that reveals God's heart. We hope that through daily, intentional study of the Bible, people will rediscover and deepen their faith.

Father Ignatius, experienced a similar reversion through scripture in his own life. After being raised Catholic and then falling away from the Church, Fr. Ignatius encountered people on staff with the Navigators during his college years where he joined a bible study and accepted Christ as his personal loving Savior.

It was also during this time that Father Ignatius became a little bit anti-Catholic, but fortunately through conversations with other believers, his heart started to open to the Church again. When Father Ignatius moved to the University of Dayton, a private Catholic college, he met a friend who was discerning seminary and who began inviting Fr. Ignatius to attend Eucharistic Adoration.

As Father Ignatius sat in the Adoration Chapel, soaking in the real presence of Christ for the first time, he contemplated John chapter 6, the bread of life discourse. Father Ignatius had prayed about this passage before visiting the church, and during adoration it stuck in his mind. "Coming to the Adoration Chapel, I just knew the Lord Jesus was present there," Father Ignatius said.

Father Ignatius began spending more time in prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament and began to consider the ways he wanted to serve others and, ultimately, serve the Lord. It was in these moments that God revealed His desire for Fr. Ignatius to give his life in service to the priesthood.

Father Ignatius' time in the priesthood has been filled with contemplation, praying with sacred scripture, and eucharistic adoration. During a few years while living with Carthusian monks, Fr. Ignatius learned to delve more deeply into the word in a monastic setting. "It was the word that awakened me to who we have in the Lord Jesus, and the grandeur of a personal relationship with him, and the Eucharist is kind of the high point of that in this life," Fr. Ignatius said.

Time contemplating in solitude, encouraged Fr. Ignatius to consider constantly the scriptures that he was encountering when praying the Divine Office. This continuous prayer also encouraged Fr. Ignatius to memorize verses of scripture that could be recalled often throughout his day.

Having spent time in prayer and community with both Protestants and Catholics, Fr. Ignatius has a unique view on the issue of ecumenism. He believes that the movement to unite all Christians, is a way to begin seeing how the Lord is working in the U.S. "He is powerfully at work in all these different Christian denominations," Fr. Ignatius said.

The key to reaching a greater level of ecumenism is to foster kind communication between different denominations. "If I'm not in any conversation with protestants I can easily miss what the Holy Spirit is doing among them," Fr. Ignatius said. By taking the time to listen to one another, much can be learned about what works, and doesn't work, to support the faithful on their path to heaven. "There is an enrichment that we can learn from the other side," Fr. Ignatius said.

One example cited by Fr. Ignatius is the creation of FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) who's inspiration was taken from the Protestant organization Campus Crusade for Christ. Both ministries heavily incorporate Scripture and set it as the center of community and prayerful discussion.

In light of the reality that more Catholic organizations are centering around Scripture, Fr. Ignatius briefly discussed the current state of the relationship between Catholics and the Bible. Fr. Ignatius believes that Catholics are getting more engaged with the scripture, and we are starting to get scholars who are providing Catholics with pathways that go deeper into scripture. Fr. Ignatius hopes that Emmaus Journey will continue to pick up this work to bring people further into scripture. "When you're touching the words of Scripture, you're touching the Word, the second person of the Trinity," he explained, while describing the significance and importance of reading the Bible.

Author: Shelby Bland is a graduating senior at Benedictine College originally from Colorado Springs. Inspired by her Catholic faith, Shelby is a journalist passionate about promoting the Truth and building up communities one story at a time.



Mission

Emmaus Journey is a lay Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry which partners with parishes, small groups, and individuals to facilitate a personal encounter with and conversion to Christ, thereby forming missionary disciples actively living for Jesus.

Vision

By encountering Christ through scripture, discipleship, and community — individuals experience:

- 1) Conversion to Christ.
- 2) Transformation in Christ; and,
- 3) Mobilization for Christ, where they are actively involved in sharing their faith with others and living out their faith in the greater community.

Thus, achieving Goal One of the USCCB's initiative on evangelization, "To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

Here is just a sample of what Emmaus Journey offers:

Small Catholic Communities.

Emmaus Journey offers a complete line of resources that include high-quality, thoroughly Catholic, practical small group Bible study materials, and discipleship resources. Most are also available in Spanish.

Reflecting on Sunday's Readings.

More than 30,000 individuals download this publication and use it in preparation for Sunday Mass or as a Scripture study. Also available in Spanish.

Daily Lectionary Reading Record.

The Lectionary Reading Record is a helpful tool for following the Scripture readings used in the daily mass. It also helps a person become consistent in their daily intake of Scripture.

Training Materials. Guides for small group facilitation.

PRAY WITH US

- For Emmaus Journey Indonesia as they plan to celebrate their "Silver Anniversary" in May, 2025, thankful for over 5000 graduates of the three book Emmaus Journey Series.
- For Emmaus Journey president, Mike Donovan, as he leads EJ staff and co-laborers into additional modes of evangelization.
- For God to lead gifted individual to serve with Emmaus Journey as we expand our ministry to Catholic parishes and individuals throughout North America.
- For a growing financial support team. Though we offer our ministry for free, it is not without cost, and many donor will spread both the expense and the blessings of Emmaus Journey.

BECOME A PARTNER WITH US

Click on one of the logo's below to get started.



Or visit: https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=C2SX5LGYNBK72

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Emmaus Journey

A Ministry of Catholic Evangelization & Discipleship