

Personal influences on reading the Bible

Each one of us brings to our reading of the Bible all the influences of our personal history. This exercise is designed to help identify what these influences are and the effect they may have on the way we read and understand the Bible.



The questions below are to help **you** identify these influences so that you can share some of the answers with others. You can use it as a personal reflection or in a group.

First encounters

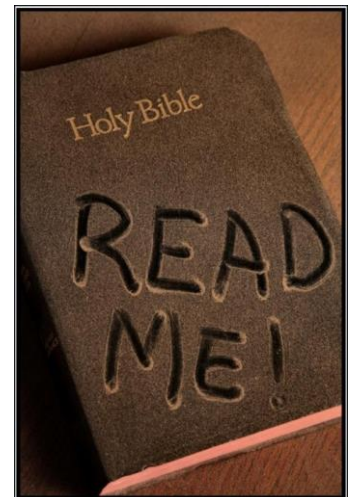
- What were my first encounters with the Bible? Where did I first hear it read? By whom?
- Was there a Bible in my home? Who read it? When?
- How was the Bible viewed in my home?
- What was my own attitude towards the Bible?
- When did I own my first copy of the Bible? In what language, translation and version?

Church history and the Bible

- Where and when did I first go to church? What denomination?
- How was the Bible used at church? Who read it?
- In what language was the Bible read? Is this my mother tongue?

Formal study of the Bible

- Do I, or have I ever, participated in a Bible study group?
- What influence has that study had on the way I now read the Bible?



Conflicts and the Bible

- Was there a time when I became aware that the Bible did not “speak” to me? Or when I felt the message of the Bible was not relevant to my life? What were the circumstances?

My identity and the Bible

- Does my ethnicity, gender, social class, education, culture influence my reading of the Bible? How?

A Simple practical exercise

- What is your favourite Bible story or scene? See if you can find it in the Bible. How easy/difficult was this?
- Is there any difference between the story as you remember it and as you read it in the Bible?
- Anything surprise you?

Life crises and the Bible

- Was there a time in my life when I went through a major crisis and the Bible was a resource to me? What was that time? How?

How did I use the Bible?

- How has my use of the Bible at that time continued to shape the way I read it today?

Present relationship to the Bible

- Do I have a Bible at home?
- Do I read it?
- In what translation/ version?
- Do I read with the assistance of study guides/ commentaries?
- What role do the sermons I hear play on my interpretation of the Bible?
- How do I view the Bible today?
- Do I use the Bible as a source of spiritual guidance? How? In what circumstances?
- What influences the way I read the Bible today?

Looking back

- Can I identify common threads in my relationship to the Bible?
- Where have there been changes in my relationship to the Bible?

Looking forward

- As I review this exercise, what has surprised me?
- Are there aspects of my relationship to the Bible I want to explore more? What are they?
- As I become aware of the influences on my reading of the Bible, is there anything I might want to change so that I become a more adequate reader of the Bible?
- Can I share these experiences with anyone?