

Public Scripture Reading

"Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture ..."

(1 Timothy 4:13)

God's desire, and therefore the Church's vision, is for the people of Willerby, Kirk Ella and beyond to have, and to keep having, Jesus as Saviour and Lord:

We are one people with all kinds of pasts and backgrounds, graciously forgiven at the cross and called together by God **encouraging one another to be faithful to our risen Saviour Jesus in the power of the Spirit by living our whole lives according to his word**, and by making Him known throughout Willerby and Kirk Ella, and beyond.

Public Scripture Reading Manual

A. Why We Read

Principle: Honouring God by reading to his people for their benefit.

1. When we gather as Christians, we gather around God who speaks to us through his Word, the Bible.
Reading the Bible is therefore central to what we do together. This is therefore a part of our gathering we are keen to do really well.
2. Paul reminds Timothy to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13). The Scriptures are God's breathed out word (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and we are convinced that God works through his word to build up his people and to call unbelievers into the church.
3. Good reading helps us focus on the passage. If the Bible is read poorly, it may seem unimportant or be distracting. Although God can still speak clearly, even when we don't read well, we ought to do it as well as we can. Negatively, we don't want to be a stumbling block to others hearing the voice of God. Positively, we read clearly and well so that God's word may change people.
4. God's word is the spotlight
 - a. *Remember it's not about the reader, but the listener*
 - We devote ourselves to the public reading of scripture out of love for those who listen.
 - Therefore, there's a need of making it clear and engaging.
 - The reading is not about you. It's not a kind of performance to get praise from people
 - *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 6:1)*
 - b. *the task*: focus on the bible, to have the text dwell vividly in their minds to help them engage well with the sermon.
 - Focus on God's word, for the benefit of those listening.
 - Let others marvel at the word but not ourselves.
 - c. *the danger*: making myself the spotlight.
 - Marvelling at my voice, my reading.
 - d. *the aim*: read it to honour God, respect his Word and honour the audience.
 - Not perfection, but *communication* for the hearers.
5. Prepare by *delighting* in what we read, in humility.
 - a. tuning ourselves to what we read
 - b. a high view of what we read
 - c. just like *musician to melody, actor to script, baker to breads, we to the word*.
 - "I have sometimes seen more in a line of the bible, than I could well tell how to stand under; and yet at another time the whole bible hath been to me as dry as a stick." (John Bunyan)
 - Sometimes refreshing waves, honey to mouth, music to ears, but sometimes nothing.
 - However, we may feel, we have to actively embrace the fact that it is God's living words, as we devote ourselves to it.
 - d. *the aim*: encouraging those to whom we read it to delight in it too

- a posture of personal delight towards the word of God
- serving both the word and the audience

B. How to Read

Principle: Prepare the reading, so that you read it well

1. Prepare Well

1. We need to understand the passage well ourselves so that we can read it properly. If we don't understand it, we will not know what words to emphasise or where to pause. We could even distort the meaning of the text by doing this poorly.
2. Work out the bearing, the part of God's unfolding revelation that we have been asked to read.
3. Orient yourself: Get a handle on the words, the scene, the context.
4. Questions to ask:
 - What has happened before this? (context)
 - What is the genre that we are reading? Reading a letter is different to reading history, or poetry.
 - What is the direction, where the passage is heading to?
 - What is the big idea (main point)?
 - What is the big aim (author's intention)?
5. Feel free to discuss it with another Christian friend if you have any doubts about what the passage means. It would delight the preacher to be asked what they think the big idea is!
6. Note any difficult words and how to pronounce them.
7. Components of Good Reading
 - a. Context
 - b. Communicate
 - c. Confidence

2. Context

1. Adapt your reading style depending on who you are reading to
 - a. Who we are reading to will shape how we read well.
 - e.g. for people for whom English is their second language, read slower, though it is unhelpfully slow for us.
 - e.g. for youth, for those who have yet to calm down, give a long introduction, with loud and calm voice to start with.
2. Before the Service: Full Dress Rehearsal
 - a. Know how you will read the Bible while still speaking into the mic - choose the position of the Bible on the lectern to suit you.
 - b. Test the mic, the distance from the mic, the direction of our mouth.
 - c. Position yourself a comfortable distance from the Bible.
 - d. Plan where you sit for easy access to the front.
3. St Andrew's Specific things
 - a. Read from the New International Version (NIV2011)

- b. The reading will be available on Church Builder several weeks before the service, and will be emailed to you on the Monday for the following Sunday.
- c. Read from a physical bible, piece of paper or tablet, not a mobile phone.
- e. There is no need to introduce yourself before you read. Keep people's focus on *the word*.
- f. Be early to the service and let the service leader know you are present.
- g. The flow:
 - i. Announce the passage to be read. You may want to announce it a few times.
 - ii. Encourage people to grab a bible and follow along.
 - iii. Pause to allow people time to find the passage. Don't worry if it feels strange standing up the front doing nothing but smiling – it is important to wait until people have found the passage! You will know they have when the rustling of pages stops and they are looking up at you expectantly.
 - iv. Read the passage
 - 1. Please don't read the Headings in Bold as they are inserted by translators and are not part of the text.
 - 2. But if you are reading a Psalm, please do read the *subheadings in italics* like '*A psalm of David*' as that is part of the text).
 - 3. Please don't read out the verse numbers at any time – unless you really think people are lost and need to know where you are up to, such as skipping a part of the text in a longer reading.
 - iv. Close with the words, "This is the word of the Lord," before the congregation respond with the words, "Thanks be to God."

3. Communicate

Principle: Read clearly in a way that illustrates the sense of the passage.

- 1. It is right for us to desire to read well, that others may hear it with clarity, expression, and conviction.
- 2. Maintain eye contact with the audience, wherever possible. For example, at the end of a sentence or paragraph break.
 - a. It reminds us that we are telling them something.
 - b. It helps people engage with the reading.
 - c. It helps get into the flow.
 - d. OR e.g., during a pause to feel the punchline of a passage

3. Pronunciation

- a. Sharp and defined
- b. Avoid sibilance
- c. The trick: Pronounce it confidently
 - i. e.g., Zerubbabel, Isaiah 8:1, abomination, commandments, desolations, the twelfth amethyst, carnelian, chrysolite
 - ii. If you are unsure of the pronunciation, ask
 - iii. Then practice it out loud until it feels natural

4. Emotions and Tones

- a. Keep the emotions and tone of the passage in perspective while reading.

- b. Reading a Psalm is very different from reading Epistles
 - i. the urgency and earnestness
 - ii. the family tone in the epistles
 - iii. the warning and red-light passages
 - iv. the intention of those warnings
- c. e.g., 2 Timothy 3:16: But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their talk will spread like gangrene.
- d. e.g. Genealogy of Jesus Christ - Matthew 1
 - i. Not a clumsy and complicated list, kamikaze shopping list
 - ii. But a royal announcement of the arrival of the man Jesus
 - iii. So read to build gradually to the climax

5. Emphasis of Key Words

- a. Notice key words and emphasise them.
- b. It helps communicating the meaning.
 - e.g. John 1:29, 36: *"Behold the lamb of God"*
- c. Show the structure, the punch, with the projection of our voices.
- d. Tricky words - crash the flow of the sentence
 - Breakdown the tricky words, know the way they are coming out.
 - Slow down your pace to counter them, slow down before a bump.
- e. Linking words: therefore, but, since
 - e.g., Romans 5:1-11: *"therefore... since... not only that... but... for... for ... but ...since, therefore... for... more than that"*

6. Punctuation

- a. A tool which translators have given to help manage the original author's thought
- b. Punctuation is thus key to effective communication.
- c. Let punctuation serve the text, guide the sense, and bring out the meaning.
- d. Full stop: signifies end of thought, chance to breath.
 - e.g. John 11:35: *"Jesus wept"*
- e. Commas: thoughts are built through commas, separate ideas that build into a big thought.
 - e.g., Hebrew 1:1-2: *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world".*
- f. Question marks
 - Make the question personal, let the listeners expect an answer.
 - Give us a chance to breath.
 - e.g. Mathew 11:3: *"Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"*
- g. Pauses
 - Add clarity, tension, and weight.

- Guide the flow and variation of the text.
- An occasional pause can be extremely helpful for making the sense and weight of a passage come to life.
- Plan out when and where to pause, that it may be more effective.
- It illuminates the text.
- Nathan confronts David!
- Luke 2:16: *"They went with haste (pause) and found Mary and Joseph (pause) and the child lying in a manger"*.

7. Breathing

- a. People get nervous and forget to breath.
- b. While waiting for others to flip, have enough breath to get through the first sentence.
- c. Plan to breath at every sentence and idea.
- d. Actively breath, helping to form sense and meaning.

8. Things to avoid:

- a. Being monotonous
- Can be avoided by having pitch, pace, and attack (emphasis).

4. Confidence

1. With what's above

2. Fake it

3. Planning ahead

- a. Plan the route to walk to the front.
- b. Will you introduce yourself or the passage.
- c. How to adjust the microphone.
- d. What we will wear.

4. Practice

- a. 4-5 times.
- b. Record your reading and listen to yourself.

5. Prayer will give us the confidence.

- a. Pray personally for our pride and confidence.
- b. Pray that the word, by His spirit, change lives.

6. SMILE!

- a. Before you begin smile naturally and make it warm.
- b. Show our delight and remind ourselves to.
- c. The highpoint of the service.
- d. We want full undivided attention for the public reading of the Scripture.

7. Let the words do the work.

- a. Helping people to delight in God's word in a way that is glorifying to Him.

C. Evaluation

It may be that you would find it helpful to ask a friend to feedback on your reading in church. Getting feedback can be really encouraging and help us to keep improving in our service.

1. Highlight a positive aspect of the person's reading that they can continue building on.
2. Highlight an aspect of the person's reading that you think can/needs to be improved.
3. Please bear in mind that this assessment is your personal opinion, and is therefore subjective.
4. If in doubt, seek the opinion of others, but DO NOT fish for compliments.
5. See the appendix

D. Practice

1. Psalm 22
2. Psalm 23
3. Mark 15
4. Ezekiel 16
5. Isaiah 52:13-53:12
6. Revelation 21
7. Exodus 32
8. Leviticus 20
9. 1 Corinthians 7

Public Bible Reading Feedback Sheet

Date: Bible Reader: Passage: ...

<i>Did the reader ...</i>	<i>Y/N</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<i>... seem prepared?</i>		
<i>... seem to know the passage?</i>		
<i>... have a friendly, confident manner?</i>		
<i>... know when to come up and read?</i>		
<i>... announce the passage clearly?</i>		
<i>... give people enough time to find the passage?</i>		
<i>... correctly use the microphone?</i>		
<i>... read the passage clearly?</i>		
<i>... read at the right volume?</i>		
<i>... read at the right pace?</i>		
<i>... pause at the appropriate places?</i>		
<i>... pronounce words correctly?</i>		
<i>... show appropriate emotion?</i>		
<i>... help me understand the passage?</i>		

Other comments:

Please return this sheet to the person who read the Bible