**Reading Scripture Summary**

**The Task of Reading**

The point of reading the bible is in the pursuit of practical wisdom – learning stuff that matters about God and us and how we should live.

But finding that practical wisdom is not always easy. We never just ‘read’ the bible, we always have to interpret it, and doing that is difficult. The bible has been interpreted in many different ways and often in a way that has done serious damage to the lives of many people.

The best way of coming to read the bible is to think about the reader, the text and the author.

**Reader**

First of all we need to consider our approach as reader. There are certain attitudes we should seek to foster.

1. Humility. We need to remember the bible has been interpreted in all sorts of ways and we are just part of that journey. We also need to remember that words always fail to express the fullness of God’s glory.
2. Honesty. We need to be honest about the bias, prejudices and presuppositions we bring to the text. We always read it with pre-conceived ideas.
3. Openness. We need to try and be open to God’s strange and challenging voice in the bible; not reading it to just back up what we already think.

**Text**

As we come to read the bible we need to remember there are many different voices within it. The bible is not one text but many and they all say slightly different things about God and how we should live.

There is a Great Conversation happening within the pages of scripture as different voices often respond to one another. We could talk about the idea of Progressive Revelation where the conversation develops and finally culminates in the person of Jesus Christ.

**Author**

The most important author for us to think about is not the individual writers, but God himself. We are always seeking to find the Word (Jesus Christ) within the words. We are to read all of the bible through Jesus, seeking his voice amidst and within the many different voices.

In Jesus we see God revealed as the one who stands with victims, who pursues peace and seeks life and love for all. This then creates a Jesus Filter, through which we try and read the rest of the bible.

**Thinking about Big Questions**

Approaching the bible by thinking about reader, text and author helps us try and think through big questions we might have. We face up to the different things the bible might say about these big questions and seek to find God’s voice in the many voices by reading through the Jesus Filter.

**Tricky Texts**

We can also use think about reader-text-author to read tricky texts (texts which jar with what we see in Jesus). Reading them through the Jesus Filter we can let these texts speak to us by

1. Seeing them as a mirror. The bad ideas and practices in the text might be mirrored in our society, church or selves.
2. Seeing them as foreshadowing or echoing Jesus. There might be something positive in the text which points to what we see in Jesus.
3. Seeing the text as a story in which people today might find their story.

The hope in the end is to be able to read the whole bible through and with Jesus.