



Anglican Province of America

A Lay Reader Guide

for Scripture Reading in
Church Service

Revised
6-21-2017

10 Tips for Reading

As the congregation listens to our reading of God's Word, they especially are open to the message that, through our lips, will be passed on to them. The transmission of the Word is an event that we cannot know how it will be received or understood, or how it might touch an emotion or event which has occurred in another person's life.

Some may come to worship with questions on their hearts and minds, such as, "How can I deal with the problem I am facing this week? What has God to tell me? What do the events of the Bible mean to my life?"

We need the reality of the Word of God. We need to know and to feel, that the Bible story we hear is real, nourishing, and relevant to our lives. At a wedding, we think of our responsibility to love all human beings. Will that love be exemplified in the presentation of the readings? When we gather at a funeral service to celebrate the life of a loved one, will the reading ease our own fear of death? We need the reassurances of the Word, as it speaks to the fullness of life, available in our every circumstance.

As Lay Readers, we are the transmitters of that Word. Our voice, our inflections, our very manner with the sacred Book, will nuance the reception of the Word of God for our hearers.

Every one of the writers – most of them unknown to us – burned with a passion to share their Spirit-filled reflections on the human condition and on our relationship to the mystery of God. What we have today is the written word on dry ink across a lifeless page. The Bible at our lecterns need the human voice to transmit the Word, to infuse it with life, and to bring home to those who hear it the immediacy that its messages had when the authors took pen in hand.

When we take our place at the lectern and open the Bible to read, we are no less actors – storytellers of God's Story. We strive to re-create, through the lines written thousands of years ago, to bring the Word of God alive to our world in the 21st century.

1. *Preparation.* Read over the assignment – and its context – enough to find some meaning for yourself in it. Know what book of the Bible it comes from and what the idea of the passage is.
2. *Practice.* Read your lesson aloud. Hear it yourself. Try varying speeds. Vary stresses until it makes sense to you. Read it aloud to someone else.
3. *At the lectern,* control the volume of your voice so that you speak each word clearly, with special attention to sentence endings.
4. *Read loudly.* The people in the last row need to hear you. Never shout, just read with intensity. (If there is a sound system, make sure the microphone is next to your mouth.)
5. *Figure out the 'mental period.'* Drop your voice, either to isolate a thought, to conclude it, or emphasize it.
6. *Take your time reading.* Force yourself to be slow and deliberate, never hurried. Let no one have a problem understanding or following you.
7. *De-emphasize the words "said" or "saying."* These are often the least important words in a sentence. It is merely a connecting link between the speaker and the text.
8. *Know when to pause.* A slight pause after each sentence, sometimes more than once during a sentence, allows listeners to follow the passage more intelligently. Pauses also mark transitions – from a narrative to a quotation, or a change in the situation being described.
9. *Maintain as much eye contact* as you can with your hearers. Engage them with your eyes as well as your words.
10. *Arrive well before the service begins* to make sure the Bible and/or Prayer Book are on the correct page on the lectern and properly marked.

Old Testament:

- Begin: "Here beginneth the ___ verse, of the ___ chapter of the Book of _____."
- Conclude: "Here endeth the lesson."

Epistle:

- Begin: "The epistle is written in the ___ chapter of St. _____'s letter to the _____, beginning at the ___ verse."
- Conclude: "Here endeth the epistle."