

# Bible Hand Copying

By Cathy Douglass

For thousands of years, the accounts of God's interactions with people have been transmitted through oral stories, Adam and Eve undoubtedly being the first. As writing developed, the hand-copied Scriptures were born, growing into scrolls and books. Eventually the printing press was invented and hand-copying became outdated. Now electronic media are obsoleting printed matter!



Yet even today many believers are discovering that hand-copying the Bible is a beautiful and meaningful spiritual practice.

## How did I get started?

The person who first influenced me to start hand-copying the Bible was my friend Mukesh Azad. He started a WhatsApp group for those who would take his challenge to copy the New Testament in 100 days. *You don't want to miss* watching this dynamic young brother give his challenge!

<https://link.nayajeevan.org/biblecopy>



After receiving Mukesh's challenge, I took up the practice. That was February, 2020 – right at the start of Covid Lockdown – when I suddenly had more time on my hands. I haven't stopped since! While I didn't set out to copy the New Testament in 100 days, I did feel God's leading to copy journals of Bible books for family members and friends, some of whom do not know the Lord. Nearly every day since I started, I spend one hour in writing out the Word of God. I start off by praying, "Open my eyes, that I may see wonderful things in your law" (Ps 119:18), or "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening" (1 Sam 3:10), or "Write these words on the tablet of my heart as I write them on paper (Prov 7:3). And I end by praying for the person I have been copying for, based on whatever I have written that day.

## How has it blessed me?

Going slowly through God's Word, as writing forces us to do, is a joy. I liken hand copying to taking a walk in the forest, compared to driving down the highway. Road trips are fine, they get you somewhere fast. But taking a walk in the forest allows you to go slowly, observe the details, smell and hear and feel things in the Bible as if you were there. Imagination comes into play as you see the scene as if you are one of the characters. I have kept a journal of the new observations I have made just while copying, that I have never noticed before.



And then there are the serendipities – like the time I was recording the birth of Jesus from Luke 2, and it happened to be well into December with Christmas music playing in the background. Or the day I was copying topical verses on health from Proverbs, while I had Covid. Other times a verse I had copied went so deep in my heart it became a message to a church I had been invited to speak to. God's timing is perfect!

### Who are the journals for?

I have copied journals for each of my grown children and grandchildren and for my husband (all of whom know the Lord), and short ones for the youth in the Awana classes my husband and I teach. I have also given Life of Christ journals for several non-Christian relatives and friends, including Hindus. Most non-Christians are interested in the life of Christ and find it a non-threatening and personal gift. I now keep a couple of Life of Christ journals, one each in a masculine-looking or feminine-looking design, ready to give in case I meet a new suitable friend.



For the Life of Christ I created a condensed compilation from the four Gospels based almost exactly on the chronology presented in John MacArthur's book One Perfect Life. Altogether it is about the length of the Gospel of Matthew. I gladly provide it here for anyone to use as desired.

<https://link.nayajeevan.org/LifeofChrist>

After copying many journals for other people, I have now copied several for myself. By the way, Mukesh reports that in the first year after his challenge, **21** people completed hand-copying the New Testament, **47** in the second year, and **231** in the third year – then he stopped tracking!

### Tips for good copying

Pick a journal that is wide-ruled if using cursive (handwriting or joined-up writing). Write larger than needed; this causes you to write more elegantly. If printing (manuscript), narrow-ruled will usually be sufficient. Select a journal that lies flat when opened; those with spiral binding are not as convenient; the rings get in the way.

When copying for my family, I gave them choices such as books of the Bible they wanted, translations, ink color, journals, and handwriting versus printing. For the young children, I left spaces between some paragraphs, which they could fill in with stickers, or their own simple prayers and responses to the stories they just read, like, "I love you Jesus," or "I want to be brave like Paul."



I have never included chapters and verses but only use paragraph format throughout all my copying. Those who receive the journals confirm that this has the intended effect of eliminating distractions and artificial divisions. They simply read and stop wherever they want to. The narrative flows more smoothly.

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A FaceBook group I have joined and recommend: Hand Writing the Bible

If you take up Bible copying, or if you gift journals you have copied to others, I would love to hear about it!

*Cathy Douglass*

949-280-5730

[Nayajeevan@cru.org](mailto:Nayajeevan@cru.org)