

An Augustinian Inspired Bible Study Plan

From a Restless Heart to Rest in God

by Fr. Dave Mercer

“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.” [Saint Augustine of Hippo]

2026 World Cup Soccer gave us great back stories about the Catholic faith of several players. American goalie, Matt Freese, is a fan of Father Mike Schmitz’s [Bible in a Year plan](#), saying he first met star teammate, Christian Pulisic, at a Bible study. I like what he had to say: “There’s just this kind of automatic connection that you make when you talk about deep subjects like faith and the Bible on a weekly basis with a teammate.”

Matt might not have been thinking of Saint Augustine, but his “team connection” reflects well Augustine’s sense of Scripture bringing people together as “one mind and one heart on the way to God.” [Acts 4:32] For an Augustinian, discipleship is not a Jesus and me experience alone; it’s a community growing *together* through the gift of God’s grace.

A young Augustine (354-430) sought wealth and fame, but was unimpressed when reading the Scripture through his own eyes. Only when hearing Saint Ambrose preaching about the Word of God did he have the humility to set aside his intellectual pride. He wrote of hearing a child’s voice, “Tolle lege, tolle lege” (“pick up and read”), which he took as God calling him to read the Bible. Only then did he approach the Scriptures on God’s terms and not his own. There he encountered the Apostle Paul’s invitation “to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. [Romans 13:13–14]”

In his book, *Freedom Under Grace*, the future Pope Leo XIV tells his brother Augustinians: “The Word of God is certainly for us a primary place of encountering God.” Sacred Scripture remained a lifelong pursuit for Augustine. At the heart of his approach was Jesus’ command to love God and neighbor. Scripture, properly understood, leads us toward love.

Focusing Question. *How is God’s Word teaching me to love God and others?*

This method considers your Bible study group as an Augustinian community that prioritizes listening. A printable [Augustinian Worksheet](#), [Study Questions](#), and [Catholic Resources and Commentaries](#) can guide your group through the steps. No prior experience with Sacred Scripture is necessary. All questions are intended as invitations for you to dialogue with the Lord. You needn’t feel pressured to share what is personal. Instead, allow the dialogue to grow naturally.

Suggestion. Consider studying the Psalms, or the Sunday readings, but with a focus on either the second or Gospel reading.

Begin with a simple [icebreaker](#).

1. Prepare to Listen

A young Augustine learned the humility to approach Scripture with an openness rather than imposing his own expectations upon it.

- **Pray for humility.** Begin with a simple prayer asking God to help you listen, perhaps using one of these [Prayers for Students](#).

2. Listen to God's Word

An Augustinian approach is to first listen to God's Word and try to understand its plain meaning.

- **Pick up and read.** Read the selected passage slowly, perhaps twice. Write down the sentence or line that stands out. What don't you understand? Write your answers on the worksheet, then share as a group.
- During the first few sessions, group members can share what they discover in their Bible's footnotes and cross-references for the passages. With succeeding sessions and as they grow as a group, they can bring other resources, such as a Catholic commentary, to their discussions, sharing insights and questions as a community. To go a little deeper, ask a few questions in the list of Study Questions and answer them together. As you do so, recall that you're reading the passage within the larger witness of Scripture and the faith of the Church.

3. Listen to the Heart

For Augustine, Scripture leads to a deeper encounter with God where we discover what our restless hearts are seeking. Answer in a journal or on the worksheet: what encourages, surprises, troubles, or challenges you?

- **Entering the heart.** The group allows God's Word to enter the heart. A key question is: "How does this passage speak to my heart when hearing it read?"
- **The restless heart.** The passage can be read again, and the group silently pauses. Members share with others if they wish to.

4. Listen to One Another

Augustine urged his community to be "of one mind and one heart on the way to God," drawing upon Acts 4:32. What does someone else notice that you didn't? How does what someone else says help you understand the passage? Members can write down what others say, as well as new insights and understandings they prompt.

5. Listen to Love's Call

For Augustine, a reader not growing in love of God and neighbor has not yet properly understood the Scriptures. And so, we now return to the question behind this Bible study: *How is God's Word teaching me to love God and others?*

- **Our response.** Whom is God's Word calling me to love more generously? And for those who wish to share: *What one thing can I do about it?*

6. Rest in God

Augustine famously wrote, "Our heart is restless until it rests in You."

- **Resting the heart.** All sit quietly for a moment, then close with a prayer, perhaps this [prayer by St. Augustine](#).

Goalie Matt Freese wasn't the only Catholic member of the U.S. Men's Soccer team at the 2026 World Cup to take Bible study seriously. A video shows forward [Christian Pulisic](#) sitting at his dining table, with Bible, pencil, and writing pad at hand. His friend asks: "What time is it?"

Augustine would say, "Pick up and read." Christian Pulisic answers: "It's Bible time."