

Living and Active | Strategies for Reading the Bible

February 10-11, 2021

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Table Question: What did you learn this week from the Word?

2 reasons we struggle with bible study:

1) we are not good readers:

We have to understand that a reading plan is not to work through the bible
It is so the Bible can work through us.

Discipline proceeds understanding

READ: Proverbs 2:1-5

2) We don't know what to look for:

8 STRATEGIES FOR READING:

1) READ PRAYERFULLY:

Simple Example:

As we began – Lord open my mind and heart to your truth

When we are stumped – Lord Help me to understand this truth

When we are done – Lord help me to respond to Your word.... always have a journal to record your responses

Turn scripture into your prayer: Ex. Romans 12:1-2

God I am grateful for you Mercy

Help me to respond as a living sacrifice Holy & Pleasing

Help all of my life to be worship

Lord Give me the strength to resist conforming to this world

Holy Spirit would you transform and renew my mind that I would know your perfect will

2) READ PATIENTLY:

Practical way to read patiently:

Work with one book a month:

Starting spots:

- Nehemiah

- Philippians

- James

- Mark

During that month approach it in 2 ways:

Zoom out:

- Big Picture

- over all flow of book

- Overall direction of the book

Zoom in:

- Chapter by Chapter - Section by section - Verse by Verse

3) READ MEDITATIVELY:**Listen to these Verses:**

Joshua 1:8
Psalms 1:1-2
Proverbs 23:7

Our minds are disproportionality cluttered with the stuff of this world – Romans 12

4) Read thoughtfully**5) Read Repeatedly:****6) Read imaginatively:****Steps to reading Imaginatively:**

- 1) use different translations, Paraphrases
- 2) Rewrite the text in your own words
- 3) Read the text out loud or listen to the text being read
- 4) Change your setting

7) READ PURPOSEFULLY:

- Have a plan, stick to the plan, if you hate the plan, change the plan, just have a plan

WAY'S TO READ WITH PURPOSE:**1) Look at the Authors aim****2) Look at Structure****A) Look at grammatical structure:**

- Verbs
 - EX. Ephesians 5:18 'Be Filled" – Passive verb
- Look for Subject & Object
- Look for Modifiers – Descriptive words (Adjectives, Adverbs)
- Look for Propositional Statements – in, on, upon, through, to,
 - in Christ - By Faith
 - By the Spirit - Under the law
- Look for Connectives – and, but, therefore
 - Ps. 37:4 – And
 - Eph. 2:1-5 – But

- Romans 12:1 – Therefore

B) Look at Literary Structure

- 1) Biographical
- 2) Geographical
- 3) Historical
- 4) Chronological
- 5) Ideological

8) READ SELECTIVELY

When approaching text like this there are 6 Questions to ask

1) WHO?

A) who are the people in the text?

- General group (Jews, Gentile, Pharisees, Sanhedrin)
- Specific people (Character Study)
- General Rule, when there is a who find out who!

B) What did they say?

- How did they respond? This gives insight to help with understanding and context

2) WHAT?

- What is happening in the text?
- In what order do the events happen?
- What's wrong with this picture?
- What are the surrounding Events?
- What happens to the characters?
- What point is being argued?

3) WHERE?

- the question of Location
- Where does it take place?
 - synagogue - City
 - House - Lake
- Where are the people
- Where are the people going or coming from

4) WHEN?

- When did this take place
- When was this written
- When did this take place in relation to other events

5) WHY? – Best question to ask when approaching scripture

- Why is this included?
- Why does it proceed that?
- Why was nothing said?
- Why is it placed here?
- Why did that person say that?

6) NOW WHAT?

- How do I apply this
- in relation to what I have learned what should I do?

READING IMAGINATIVELY

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

John 2:1-11

TIME COMMITMENT:

30-60 minutes

"If we always read Scripture in the same way and in the same place time after time, we run the risk of making it into a routine exercise with little interest or excitement. What a tragedy, especially when we consider that history's greatest works of art and music have been created by people who learned to read the Bible imaginatively" (p. 110).

Read John 2:1-11. You probably know the story, but let's try to use our imagination a little bit.

Think back to the last wedding you attended of someone who was close to you. Suppose that person and his or her new spouse showed up at their reception to discover that for some reason there were no beverages. There were expensive canapés and extravagant desserts, but nothing to wash them down with. And all the nearby stores were closed. The newlyweds had no Plan B. How do you suppose they would feel? How would you feel as you saw them in such an embarrassing position on what should be their special day? Do you think everyone would be content to toast them with water?

With that in mind, how do you think Jesus felt when He heard that the newly married couple at Cana was running out of wine for their guests?

Do you feel there is any significance in the fact that this was the first of Jesus' miracles? If so, why?

Do you get the sense that Jesus was concerned only for the spiritual well-being of this couple? What does your response suggest about Jesus' concern for your own current struggles?

If we read this account with little or no imagination, we conclude that Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine. But if we imagine ourselves there, or Jesus here among us, we may get a glimpse of an infinite God who is concerned about all of our problems and embarrassments of life.

Similar lessons are to be found when we use our imagination as we sail with Noah, stand in the fiery furnace, witness the fall of Jerusalem, worship at the manger, or share a plank with Paul after a violent shipwreck.

If your imagination is out of shape, you'll need more practice than most people. But if you're willing to put a little effort into these exercises, we imagine you will benefit immensely.

READING PRAYERFULLY

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Ephesians 3

TIME COMMITMENT:

30–60 minutes

“Of all the strategies to first-rate Bible reading, prayerful reading probably requires the most cultivation” (p. 105).

Ephesians 3 is part of a letter where we might say that Paul was *writing* prayerfully. As Paul considered all God was doing for himself and others, he was moved to include a prayer for the Ephesians within the letter itself. We can maintain a prayerful mind-set as we *read* this letter.

First read Ephesians 3:1–13. Consider:

- What were some of the things on Paul's mind for which he was thankful?

- What “mystery” was being uncovered for which the Ephesians (and we) should be grateful?

- Based on this information, how did Paul want the Ephesians (and us) to respond?

Read Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14–21. This particular prayer doesn't contain much *confession* on Paul's part (though he is very clear about his past sins in other portions of Scripture).

- What *adoration* does Paul include in his prayer?

- What are Paul's *petitions* to God?

- How do you think it made the Ephesians feel to know that Paul was praying these things on their behalf?

Do you find motivation to pray based on the content of Ephesians 3? If so, consider:

- What specific things do you find for which you can pray with adoration? (Are there any promises to claim?)

- Does anything here prompt a confession for recent actions or thoughts?

- Like Paul, do you know anyone for whom you would like to petition God, praying for the best God has to offer them based on Ephesians 3?

Reading the Bible prayerfully should not only help you get more from Scripture; it should make prayer become much more natural and effective for you. Remember, stop trying to compare your prayers to anyone else's. Prayer is simply communication between you and God. Be yourself, and you'll do much better at seeing God for who He really is.

READING REPEATEDLY

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Romans 5

TIME COMMITMENT:

30 minutes daily

“You may be an expert in a given field. If you read a book in that field two or three times, you’ve got it. You can put it on the shelf and move on to something else. But that’s never true of the Bible. Read it over and over again, and you’ll still see things that you’ve never seen before” (p. 83).

Certain passages of Scripture almost demand repeated readings, and the book of Romans contains many such examples. Plan to spend the next week thinking about Romans 5.

Day 1 Read Romans 5. Spend a half hour or so differentiating between the portions you think you understand clearly and those that may remain something of a mystery to you. Record any questions you have.

Day 2 To put Romans 5 in a proper context, read Romans 1–5 straight through. As you read Romans 5 again, make a note of any verses that refer back to something Paul had already said in Romans 1–4. (Note: Any passage that begins with “Therefore” will refer to previous material.)

Day 3 If possible, find an audio version of this passage. (Other options include having someone else read it to you, or reading it aloud.) Listen for repeated words or phrases. What is Paul trying to emphasize in this passage?

Day 4 Paul is dealing with some complex issues and deep thoughts. Use one or more different translations to try to get some alternative ways to express his statements. (You might want to try the Phillips translation, which inserts clarifying statements within the text.)

Day 5 Go to the other extreme from what you did yesterday. Today try to find a simplified paraphrase of Romans 5. Consider the *New Living Translation*, *The Message*, or even a children's translation. Determine how these concepts might be explained to people who don't have a vast understanding of Scripture.

Day 6 Suppose you're a reporter and Romans 5 is an account that comes in over the wires. It's your job to write it up. Read the chapter again. Then determine what you think should be the headline and lead sentence.

Day 7 Read Romans 5 again. Have any of your questions from Day 1 been answered by now? If you have remaining questions, good! Perhaps you'll keep reading until they are clarified. If you don't give up, you will arrive at answers to most of your Bible questions.

READING PURPOSEFULLY

TODAY'S PASSAGE:

Colossians 1:15–29

TIME COMMITMENT:

45 minutes

“Two of the most powerful words in the Bible are *and* and *but*. . . . Another important connective is *therefore*. Whenever you see a *therefore*, go back and see what it’s there for” (p. 121, 122).

While the previous assignment in Jeremiah was a good study in purposeful reading via history, biography, geography, and so forth, now we turn our attention to a passage that will better allow us to examine grammar to understand the author’s purpose.

Read Colossians 1:15–29 and answer the following questions.

- You won’t find any *therefores* in this section (at least, not in the *New American Standard Bible*), but what other connectives can you find that help determine the purpose of what Paul was writing?

- Did you notice a change of verb tenses back and forth from past to present? What significant events have taken place in the past? How does what has been done in the past affect the present?

- One clear focus is on the person of Jesus Christ. Read the passage and record all the significant information you can gather about Jesus.

- A secondary focus is on the writer of the letter. What things does this section say about Paul?

- Don't miss the third focus on the benefits of the recipients of the letter. The Colossian church received a number of instructions and promises in this passage—and so do you and I. How many can you find?

- Finally, there's an important two-letter word in verse 23: *if*. It would have been simple enough for Paul to have omitted this clause. So what do you think was his purpose in adding it?
