

How to read the Bible

Breakout Session 8/16

Intro - We long for you to read, study, memorize, meditate on, apply, share, and teach God's word!

- Not because it's just something you should do, but that you might behold God and find satisfaction in his love. God's word reveals God's character and his works. The Scriptures make us wise for salvation and through them God speaks to us.
 - There is no shame here if you are a beginner in the Bible or have read it through 100 times. You are not less because you struggle to read. Everyone has to start somewhere so start now. If you struggle to read the Bible, keep trusting God and trying.
 - *Matthew 28:19-20* - And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
 - We are called to make disciples and teach them to follow the commands and teachings of Jesus - We cannot do this unless we ourselves are being disciples of Jesus and studying, applying, and doing his word!
 - The word of God is core to discipleship - we as believers submit ourselves to the word of God - Every discipleship meeting should include studying, discussing, and applying God's Word
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Why do we read God's word?

Reasons for lack of motivation

Group Discussion: Why don't Christians read the Bible?

- Don't know where to start
- Can't stay focused
- It's boring
- They don't understand what they are reading
- They don't have the time for it
- Lack of trust in the Bible
- Makes them feel guilty
- They just don't want to
- They are discouraged by bad motivations

If you relate to any of these, wrestle with it. Pray and ask God to change your desires.

Common dangerous motivations to read:

To impress / Satisfy others

Result -> Feel like the Word doesn't apply or speak to you personally

To Gain God's approval / Check a box

Result -> Feel like a failure / always burdened by new rules to follow

To gain knowledge / Solve problems

Result -> Lack of conviction and joy / produces a judgemental, prideful spirit

Bible Study & Group Discussion

- Split into small groups (5 min)
 - Psalm 19:7-14
 - Psalms 119: 1-16
 - Proverbs 2
- Ask:
 - How does the passage describe God's word, testimonies, wisdom, etc?
 - What does the author do in response to God's word?
 - What happens to the person who learns and applies God's word?
- Discuss answers as a group (6 min)

Good motivations for us to read God's Word

1. It is how we know God – his character, perspective, desires, hates, loves, etc.
2. It teaches us to imitate his ways (which lead to a good life) (2 Peter 1)
3. It is a way for God to speak directly into our day to day lives
4. By it, God renews our hearts and minds
5. It keeps us from sin and evil (Luke 4:1-13)

How do we read God's word?

Attitudes

- **Begin with prayer** - Ask God to help you understand what you read
 - *2 Timothy 2:7* - The Lord gives us understanding
 - *James 1:5-6* - If you lack wisdom, ask God in faith and he will give it to you
- **Read with reverence**
 - *2 Timothy 3:16-17* - "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."
 - *1 Thessalonians 2:13* - "And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers."
 - How have you received the Word of God?
 - Though written by many different human authors, the Bible is God's Word. If this is true, we can not read it like any other book. If God's commands contradict our desires, we must seek to submit to his lordship in our lives.
- **Seek Jesus, not knowledge**
 - *John 5:39, 46* - "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me... For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me."
 - "We must never forget the Bible's 'big story.' The whole Bible is about Jesus Christ—who he is and what he came to do. The Old Testament anticipates Jesus, and the New Testament reveals Jesus. Every book contributes to the message of a holy God's saving mercy in Christ. While not every Old Testament passage explicitly anticipates Christ, every text moves the story toward its climax in Jesus." (Crossway, 5 Things to...)
 - Jesus is the one whom the scriptures are all pointing towards. The Bible is one unified story pointing to Jesus. Further, Jesus is the one in whom we find eternal life. In him, we find satisfaction, joy, peace, grace, and love. Knowledge alone doesn't satisfy unless it leads us to the person of Christ.
- **Be doers of the word**
 - *James 1:22* - "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."
 - Ask questions about how you can practically apply the Word
 - How can I apply this to my life?
 - How can I live in obedience to Jesus today?

Practices

- **Read contextually**

- *Group - Have you ever heard someone take scripture way out of context?*
- Context is extremely important! It is very important to read for the author's intended meaning, rather than a meaning of our own. Considering the context of a passage or verse can help us in our understanding and keep us from misinterpreting the Bible.
- When you read, ask:
 - What does the passage say, with no interpretation?
 - Does my takeaway or conclusion from the passage match up with the surrounding context?
 - Are you adding in personal opinions or ideas?

- **Become familiar with God's Word!**

- The Bible is a collection of 66 books written over a span of around 1,500 years. It includes many different forms of literature such as poetry, narrative, prophecy, and letters.
 - Seek to learn how to read these different forms of literature and to become familiar with all the books of the Bible
 - Use resources like the Bible Project to help you see the big picture

- **Ask questions!**

- Ask about words and phrases. Go deeper, especially when there is something that you don't understand. Write down questions when you don't understand and search for the answer!
- Ask about the connections to other parts of the Bible
 - Explore ideas or things that feel inconsistent or contradictory
- Challenge: Don't take the easy way when you don't understand! Try to avoid immediately searching the answer online or looking at a commentary. Search for the answer within Scripture from the context, look at other passages, ask other believers, read the passage in multiple versions, use hyperlinks, find a reliable application that allows you to see the words or phrases in the Greek or Hebrew.

- **Read in community**

- *Acts 2:42* - "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."
- *Colossians 3:16* - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."
- Read God's Word with other Christians
 - Reading in community can bring out new insights or help in answering questions about a passage