



CHRIST CHURCH PRESS

The Monthly Newsletter of Christ Church, Presbyterian
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January 2016

The Pastor's Selection

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- 13 Scott Doss
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Bible Reading Is an Art

— David Mathis, *Desiring God*

There is some science to good Bible reading.

It's important to know the fundamentals of language and communication, of subjects and verbs and objects, and most importantly conjunctions. Much can be gained from boning up on some basics of English or reading in Mortimer Adler's *How to Read a Book* or Tony Reinke's *Lit! A Christian Guide to Reading Books*. It's helpful to have good Bible study aids, like overviews, introductions, and reliable commentaries (especially for the Old Testament prophets), and to have some sense of how the Scriptures are put together as a whole.

And just like we learn to ride a bike with training wheels, it can help to have someone spell out some simple method of "inductive Bible study" with the dance steps of observation, interpretation, and application. Rudimentary, memorable approaches like this abound in Christian circles serious about the Bible. They are a gift to help us get going, and come to an otherwise dauntingly large Book with some idea of what to do next.

But the point of learning the little bits of science behind it all is to be ready to dance when the music begins to play. And the best of dancing isn't just taught in classrooms, but caught in practice.

Good Bible reading is no mere science; it is an art. The Bible itself is a special compilation of great artistries. And the best way to learn the art of reading the Bible for yourself is this: Read it for yourself.

Ask an Old Saint

Ask an old, weathered saint who's been reading the Scriptures for himself for decades. See if he has a nice, clean formulation for how he goes about his daily reading. Does he have three or four simple, memorable steps he walks through consciously each day? The answer likely will be no; he's learned over time there's more art to it than that.

Or more generally, just ask, How do you go about reading the Bible? You might see it on his face that it's a tough question to answer. Not because there aren't some basic, little "scientific" things, like the basics of reading and comprehension, or the various patterns and methods he's developed for feeding his own soul over the years, but because he's learned that so much of good Bible reading is an art. It's a skill learned in engaging the task, not mainly sitting under formal instruction. And those who have read their Bibles most are the ones who have learned the craft best.

Learn the Art Through Practice

No biblical author gives us any nice, clean acrostic for how to go about daily devotions. That may feel daunting for the beginner who wants help, but in the long run it proves wonderfully freeing. It can be a great help to have training

Anniversaries

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wheels for a season, but once you learn to ride the bike, those extra things sticking out the back are terribly constrictive and limiting.

At the end of the day, there is simply no replacement for finding a regular time and place, blocking out distractions, putting your nose in the text and letting your mind and heart be led and captured and thrilled by God himself communicating to us in his objective written words.

So, here at the outset of a new year, if you feel uncomfortable in the Scriptures, and inadequate in the art of Bible reading, the single most important thing you can do is make a regular practice of reading the Bible for yourself. There is no substitute for a few focused minutes each day in the text. You may be surprised how much the little bits add up in the long haul.

As much as we want a quick-fix, some fast lesson that makes us near-experts in eight short minutes, the best of Bible reading isn't learned overnight, or even after a semester of lectures, but day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, imbibing the Bible, having God's words inform our minds, inspire our hearts, instruct our lives. It is then that we slowly see the lights going on everywhere as we walk through life, and keep walking through the texts.

Discover the Art of Meditation

One piece of counsel for any Bible reading plan, however ambitious, is this: Don't let the push to check boxes keep you from lingering over a text, whether to seek to understand it (what we might call "study") or to emotionally glory in what you understand ("meditation").

Think of your Bible reading as a daily surveying of the biblical landscape to find a spot to settle down for a few moments to meditate, which is the highpoint and richest moment of Bible intake. Go for breadth (in reading) and depth (in study), where you stop at something you don't understand, pose questions and provide answers, consult resources, and perhaps capture a brief reflection in words or a diagram. There is a place for "raking" in Bible reading and gathering up the leaves at a swift pace, but when we "dig" in Bible study, we unearth the diamonds. In meditation, we marvel at the jewels.

Bible reading is like watching the film in real-time. Study is like going through a clip frame by frame. Meditation, then, along with Scripture memory, is for lingering over particular frames and pressing the significance to our hearts, and into our lives.

Grow in Finding Jesus

One final thing to say about Bible reading as art, not just science, is that Jesus taught his apostles to read the Scriptures in what we might describe as an artistic way. The science part of Bible reading is essential, but it doesn't necessitate reading so rigidly, narrowly, and modernistically that only the most explicit and specific of prophecies apply to Christ, or that the text is always "for the original readers" and never for us.

Jesus himself read the Scriptures with much more flair – not in any way making things up, but seeing with the eyes of faith what's really there to be seen below the surface, often out of sight to the natural mind. Such deep reading is a kind of acquired taste, through regular practice, not an easily transferred skill; it's developing the apostolic palette for finding Jesus throughout the Scriptures, in his many textures and hues, without falling into either unbelief or make-believe. It is learning with the apostle John that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10).

And so "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets," Jesus himself "interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). He claimed, "Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). He said Moses "wrote of me" (John 5:46), and that "everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44). And so he opened their minds – beyond their narrow, fallen rationality – to truly understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).

As we learn to read the Bible not only with our left brain, but with our whole mind and heart, we see more and more how the apostles heard the whispers of the Scriptures – and how they saw pointers to Jesus everywhere.



Make plans to start the new year in the house of God with a special communion service lead by Dr. John W. P. Oliver during the morning worship on January 3, 2016.



Our next Share Your Faith workshop will be held on Saturday, January 30, from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Our trainer this year is Wes Knight of Everyday Evangelism. Mark your calendar today and join us to enhance your ability to share your faith clearly, confidently, and winsomely.

Adult Sunday School News

We are excited about the upcoming start of our new adult Sunday School curriculum. We are signing up attendees through January 3, 2016, for a start date of January 10. Four courses will be offered in Unit 1: "God's View of Marriage," "The Parables of Jesus," "The Existence of God" and "Development of the Canon." Please make it a priority to begin the New Year by being a part of this opportunity to grow in knowledge and understanding of God's Word.

Grounded Foster Family Ministry

We are so pleased with the response we have received to the various needs our new ministry is attempting to meet!

Care Communities:

Currently we have our first Care Community launched and serving Jack & Phyllis Endres, a sweet Columbia County couple who has been fostering for over 28 years. We look forward to supporting them in practical ways as well as lifting them up continually in prayer as they serve God and our community's children. We also have our second Care Community gearing up to place around our very own Jones family. Josiah and Jenn will be opening their home to accept infants this month. Please pray for their family as they ready their home and their hearts for these babies.

Parents' Night Out:

Our second Parents' Night Out for local foster families will be held in Covenant Hall on Saturday, February 6th, from 5:00-8:00 p.m. We had four precious children attend our first and were thrilled to give two local foster moms a chance for some much-needed bonding time with their older children. We expect to have a few more kids this time around, so please let us know if you'd like to volunteer. All you need is a background check on file with the church and a willing and happy heart!

Sweetcases:

And a huge **THANK YOU** to everyone who donated their time and/or supplies to help make our first Together We Rise fundraiser a big success! Together with Warren Baptist, we were able to provide Columbia and Richmond County DFCS offices with over 50 stuffed duffel bags for children coming into foster care, as well as supplies to fill many more bags! The social workers were simply overwhelmed when we delivered them. We appreciate everyone's generosity to help show our community's children that they are valuable and loved.

If you are interested in volunteering with Grounded, please contact Dessa Edwards. We have long- and short-term opportunities available. 706-627-9430 or desa.edwards@gmail.com.

Student Stuff

At the start of a new year, we often hear various individuals sharing their New Year's Resolutions. The problem is often that many of these resolutions are focused on the individual. While setting goals can be a good thing, the nature of self-reliance behind them often leads to failure and disappointment. We mean well, but life gets busy. We return to old habits. We go back to what is comfortable and what we are used to. We rely solely on ourselves to change our situation, thinking that we have the power and the goodness to do so.

How different would all of this look if we prayed about these things, giving them up to God and His will in our lives? Now I'm not saying that if we simply pray, we will accomplish each resolution that we set at the beginning of the year. What prayer would do is greatly change our mindset in this area. We would not view life as what we can do for ourselves. We would not even view life as what we can do for God, but rather, what He can do in and through us.

Starting this month, our focus in student gatherings will be prayer. We will begin a four-week series on Wednesday nights that looks deeper into prayer. We will be studying prayer throughout the Bible while reflecting on if our prayers are truly concerned with the things of God. We will be discussing how we can grow in our prayer lives as individuals and what we can do as a youth group.

Thank you all who have been praying for our youth group, and we ask that each of you continue to do so in this next year. Pray for our students, that they would continue to grow in their knowledge of God and that they would experience Him in their lives. Pray for our gatherings and events, that they would be times for us to grow in relationship with one another and most importantly, grow in relationship with Christ. The Lord has recently blessed us with an opportunity to hold a Bible study at Lakeside High School twice per month. We ask that you pray that students at Lakeside would be open to attending and would be receptive to God's Word. We are extremely grateful that He opened this door into sharing the Gospel at a public school. As a church, pray that we would have more opportunities to reach our neighbors in the community, while also building disciples within our current youth group.

Christ Church Press

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Address Service Requested



January

Each Sunday's Schedule: 9:45 a.m. Sunday School • 11 a.m. Worship • 6 p.m. Worship

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11:00 a.m. Holy Communion 5:00 p.m. Prayer Meeting		7:00 p.m. Diaconate Meeting 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study, Evans		6:00 p.m. Young Family & Couples Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study, Augusta	6:00 p.m. Parent/Student Trivia Night	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
5:00 p.m. Prayer Meeting	7:00 p.m. Session Meeting 7:00 p.m. Trail Life	10:00 a.m. Ladies Daytime Bible Study		6:45 p.m. Women's Bible Study		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
5:00 p.m. Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m. Student Gathering	7:00 p.m. Trail Life	7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study, Evans		6:00 p.m. Young Family & Couples Bible Study 7:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study, Augusta		9:00 a.m. Trail Life: Bird House Project
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
5:00 p.m. Prayer Meeting				6:45 p.m. Women's Bible Study	6:00 p.m. Youth Bowling	9:00 a.m. Share Your Faith Workshop
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5:00 p.m. Prayer Meeting			Each Wednesday's Schedule: 6:00 p.m. Midweek Gathering • 6:30 p.m. Student Gathering 7:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal • 8:15 p.m. Brass Ensemble			