



Reading for Relationship

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First published, April 2018

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What is this resource for?

The Word of God has the power to change your life!

In Isaiah 55:10-11, God says through the prophet ...

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

The same powerful Word that created the universe, that commanded the storm to be still, that raised Lazarus from the grave, that a billion Christians have responded to in faith, and that brought *you* such great joy the first time you gave your life to Christ – is the same powerful Word that will water and refresh your thirsty soul day by day, feed and nourish your spirit with the richest of fare, satisfy your deepest need, and always (v.11) accomplish what God desires, and achieve God’s purposes. **It’s not possible to truly receive God’s Word and not be changed, refreshed, satisfied, renewed.**

So how come sometimes we read the Bible and feel like it does nothing for us? We feel bored? We know we should spend time in Scripture, but it feels like a chore ... that there are so many other things we’d rather do; so many other things more pressing, more interesting, more satisfying?

Could it be, that just like the four different soils, in the parable Jesus told of the Sower and the Seed (Matt 13) where only the good soil truly received the seed of God’s Word and produced a harvest as intended; the other three soils had seed scattered but never *truly* received – not the way God intended – and so the same seed ‘did nothing’ or very little.

We hope this leaflet provides some helpful ideas and insight into how you might ‘truly receive’. May the Word of God not be rendered ineffective in our lives!

Six Helpful Hints

Summary – For Relationship: Regularly Read, Reflect, Record, and Review.

1. It's about **Relationship** with a Person ...
 - The Bible is not an end in itself.
 - The written Word is meant to help us towards getting to know Jesus, the Living Word.

2. A little bit **Regularly**, is better than a lot rarely ...
 - Three small meals a day, is better than only one all-you-can-eat smorgasbord once a week; a two-minute shower every day, is better than a day-long spa only once a year.
 - So in your devotional life, aim for a little bit *every day*.
 - And just like with your daily shower, remember to SOAP ... Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer.

3. **Read** ... we do need to read Scripture in order to get something from it ...
 - Spend at least 5, 10, 15 minutes reading (depending on whether you are a novice, growing, or experienced).
 - This is the 'S' in SOAP.
 - Before you read, and throughout the process, remember to pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word, by His Spirit. This is the 'P' in SOAP.
 - Follow a reading plan, such as on the *YouVersion* Bible app, BibleGateway.com, or simply Google 'Bible reading plan'.
 - Some suggested year-long daily devotionals ...
 - Novice: *Our Daily Bread*, ODB app/website.
 - Growing: *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers, or *Morning and Evening* by Charles Spurgeon.
 - Experienced: *For the love of God, Vol 1 and 2* by D.A. Carson.

4. **Reflect** ... this is probably *the most important* part of the process
- We need to inwardly digest and absorb God's Word.
 - Think about it from the analogy of physical nutrition – eating a meal takes 10-15 minutes; but depending on what you eat, food takes from 24-48 hours to pass through your approximately six metres of small and large intestine, during which nutrients are absorbed.
 - Reading the Bible without reflection is like eating food with no absorption ... there is no lasting benefit!
 - For God's Word to have the impact intended, we must Reflect.
 - Suggested ratio of time spent reading to time spent reflecting ... minimally 1:1.
 - Better 1:4 (or more) ... just like with food in your gut, the longer and more deeply you reflect on what you've read in the Bible, the better.
 - Here's how: consider what you've read in the Bible and ask, "What does this passage tell me –
 - about **God** or **Jesus**.
 - about **People**, more specifically **Me**!
 - to **Do** (necessary, possible, impossible ... *necessary* is what all people must do always; *possible* is what some people could do sometimes; *impossible* is what no one can do ever).
 - what should I **Share** with someone else (for encouragement, or accountability).
 - Those first two are the 'O' in SOAP; the last two are the 'A' in SOAP.
5. **Record** ... based on your reading and reflection, keep a journal ...
- Somehow record your response to: "What is God saying to you?" and "What are you going to do about it?"
 - You could use a physical notebook, or a Word doc (one per month), or your smart phone.
 - Keep your physical journals, or on USB stick, or in digital cloud e.g. Google drive, Dropbox, Evernote, One Note.
6. **Review** ... keep going back to your journal to remind yourself ...
- What did God say this morning? Yesterday? Earlier in the week? Last year, or 5/10/20 years ago?
 - How has He changed you? Did God follow through? Did you?