

Read for depth not for distance

Devotional for October 2, 2020

By Major Brian Coles

The Bible is God's revelation of himself to us and our primary means of hearing his voice and discovering his will.

Growing up, I heard repeatedly the importance of reading the Bible and praying. What I've discovered is that prayer and Bible reading are not two separate activities.

They are two parts of a conversation. In reading the Bible, God speaks you, and you respond to God through prayer.

So how do you allow the Bible to direct your conversation with God? Here's one method. **Read for depth not for distance.**

What do I mean by that? Reading the Bible for distance is like skipping a stone across the surface of Cultus Lake.

It's fun to impress your friends with how far you can skip the stone across the lake, just like it is telling your friends you've read 5 chapters of Luke today.

But we can come away from the experience empty-handed.

Reading for depth, on the other hand, is like stopping at one place on the bank of Cultus Lake, and looking down into the water to see how deep and clear it is.

The longer you look in just one place – or one chapter, paragraph, or verse in the Bible – the more you can see. And the more you can see, the fuller the experience is.

Reading for depth instead of distance gives you the opportunity to search for and discover new nuggets of truth.

So I would suggest to you that when reading your Bible, depth is a more rewarding experience than distance. Reading through the Bible is not a race. It's more like an exploration.

So whatever time you have, 10 minutes or an hour, take your time. Don't rush your conversation with God and his Word.

In *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Don Whitney says that Bible reading should be like making a cup of tea. You are the cup of water and the Bible is the tea bag.

Reading a passage of the Bible once is like dipping the tea bag into the water one time. Not much happens to the water.

But if you immerse the tea bag and let it steep in the water, the water will soon absorb all the flavour and aroma of the tea.

When you "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," as Paul points out in Col. 3.16, you begin to absorb the flavour, the aroma, the character of Christ.

This reading for depth is also called, "meditative reading." To many people meditative reading sounds strange and new age-y;

something people do to clear their minds as they contort their bodies into weird positions and try to get in touch with their cosmic otherness.

But true biblical meditation means to think deeply on a passage of scripture, to fill your mind with it,

to look at it from different angles like a jeweler examining the facets of a diamond.

And as you meditate on the text, you apply it to your life. The Bible is both a light and a mirror to the soul.

So ask yourself, "What is this light of scripture revealing? How do I look in the mirror of this truth? What does God want me to see and how does he want me to live?"

The more you get out of God's word, the more God will get out of you.

Your passions will change. You'll become more patient and compassionate.

Your outlook on life will change. All your circumstances, challenges, and opportunities will be filtered through the lens of scripture.

Your prayer life will change. It will become conversational rather than one-sided.

God starts the conversation though his Word and you respond praying according to what you hear him say in the scripture you're meditating on.

Your motivation will change. You'll stop reading and praying for the sake of duty and instead be reading and praying for the sake of growing your friendship with God.

The Bible will change. It will become more than a book on a table or shelf, and more an encounter with a living friend.

Looking at our tea bag again, not only does the water absorb the flavour and character of the tea, the water also takes on a whole new identity.

We no longer call it a cup of water; we now call it a cup of tea.

When you read for depth rather than distance, and "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," you will absorb the character of Christ and take on a whole new identity.

You will become more and more the man or woman God wants you to become.