

The Discipline of Reading the Bible

2 Timothy 3:15-17 - All scripture is useful for training in righteousness, which is what we are seeking in our pursuit of spiritual disciplines.

James 1:25 - Endeavoring to study God's word intently with the desire that as we yield to the Lord's will revealed therein, it will continue the process of transformation in our hearts and lives.

We begin our study of scripture by confessing our sin. Hebrews 4:12 - Recognizing that nothing is hidden from God and His word, so God already knows whatever sin we need to confess. **1 John 1:9** teaches that if we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sin and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

We also ask Him to probe our hearts and reveal what we need to see.

At this point we must select a passage - there are a variety of means used to do this. At times, it is certainly appropriate to allow the Spirit to direct based on the prayer mentioned above. In order to be exposed to all of God's word (and thus allow His penetrating power to speak regularly into all areas of our lives) it is important to **have a plan for systematic exposure to all of scripture**. Whether reading chronologically, or reading all of the Bible in a year, or reading in conjunction with some other Bible reading plan, **the important thing is to read all of scripture regularly**. We don't want to inadvertently create a Thomas Jefferson Bible!

Read scripture slowly, for understanding of what the original author was trying to communicate

- Do you know the genre of the book? What are ways this genre was used and how should it be understood today?
- Do you know why the author wrote it? The original intent of the author is critical to avoiding misinterpreting/applying a scripture.
- Do you know the context of the particular verse? Every word fits in a sentence, which fits in a paragraph, which fits into a chapter, which fits into a book, which fits into a testament, which fits into the Bible. The context of the verse cannot be removed and still arrive at the intended meaning.
- Summarize the truth of the passage in 18 words or less.

**** There are many study Bibles and commentaries that can help in this process. Don't feel like you have to recreate the wheel!**

Once you understand the message as it was originally intended, it is time to apply the truth to your own heart and life. Some methods that can be helpful are listed below.

- **What stands out to you?** - A word? Phrase? A picture painted? A verb? The characters involved?
- **Why does this stand out to you?** - Remembering what the author intended, ask God why this stands out to you. Ask Him how the truth applies. Slow down!! Meditate on the verse or phrase. Memorize it. Think/pray through every possible angle in light of all you know of who you are and the passage in question. What is happening in your life right now that makes this important?
- **Write this down!** Once you know why it stands out, you know what the Holy Spirit is trying to say to you via this particular passage. If it is important enough for God to say, it is important enough for you to write down and remember.

- ***Be transformed*** - Romans 12:2 - The Word of God is transformative only as we respond to the truth it reveals. It is not enough to know what needs to change. We must be changed. How does God want you to respond to the message He has given you? What does He want you to do? What action do you need to take? What behavior do you need to stop/start? What attitude needs to change? What person do you need to reach out to?
- ***Make a plan and do it*** - The God of the universe wants to mold you into who He wants you to be and to use you to impact the world with the good news of the Kingdom. For this to happen, you must yield your will to His.
 - Be prepared for resistance! Romans 7. Old habits die hard. New habits are difficult to start. Tasks to love people well require courage to step out, step up and speak out.
 - Celebrate what God is doing!
- ***Restart the process*** - Continue to be transformed!