

## **Learning to Love the Story [Psalm 1:1-3]**

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**Big Idea: When we learn to love God's Word, we learn to live God's way.**

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### **// INTRODUCTION**

***I love coffee.*** The smell, the taste, the warmth of a hot mug in my hands first thing in the morning, and even a cold iced coffee late in the afternoon. Night, day, summer, or winter, I consume coffee. Some might even say I have a problem.

Yet, believe it or not, there was a time when I didn't like coffee. A time when I couldn't understand why adults would voluntarily drink something that bitter. But then I went to college and everything changed... It wasn't just that I needed the caffeine to survive the late-night homework, though I definitely did. It was the environment. There was a coffee shop near campus where people gathered. ***Meaningful conversations happened there, and I felt like I was missing out on something that everyone else was enjoying.***

So, I kept trying coffee. But one day I tried it differently. Instead of gulping down whatever was the cheapest, I asked friends for recommendations on how to drink it. I tried coffee with lots of cream and sugar. I probably had some kind of venti upside-down Carmel macchiato with maple cold foam.

***Then slowly, over weeks and months, I developed a taste for it.*** Now I'm the guy who won't let anything or anyone interrupt my coffee first thing in the morning.

***Most of us know the story of the Bible, but do we love it?***

***There's a difference between knowing about something and actually loving it.*** Some of us approach the Bible like I used to approach coffee – we like the idea of it... We may even like the smell of it, but honestly, it feels more like medicine than something enjoyable. We feel guilty when we don't do it, and when we do, we're just trying to get through it.

***What if that could change?***

***What if reading the Bible could be something you actually look forward to?***

***What if, instead of it feeling like a spiritual chore, consuming God's Word was as nourishing and comforting as that morning cup of coffee?***

***I believe that's possible, and it's what we are going to dive into today.*** Learning to love the story of God. Taking delight and finding joy in reading and consuming the Bible.

This series Pastor Spencer has been leading us through has been so good, and it is so important for every Jesus follower to understand. Over the last two weeks, he's emphasized several important facts...

- The Bible is the most sold book and the least read.
- As followers of Jesus, we should desire to have the kind of relationship with the Scripture that Jesus had.
- And together, we are seeking to raise the value of Scripture in our lives and in our community.
- We understand that the story of God shapes the people of God.

*Here's what I hope we grasp today...*

When we learn to love God's Word, we learn to live God's way.

// **THE PROBLEM:** We Read the Bible Like it's Medicine

But here's what I've noticed... Most of us read the Bible like we're taking vitamins. We know it's healthy and good for us, so we try to get it down as quickly as possible and move on with our day.

*We read it because...*

- We're supposed to.
- We feel guilty when we don't.
- We want to check it off our spiritual to-do list.
- We think God will be mad if we skip it.

Eugene Peterson puts it this way... ***"The Bible is not a book that we master; it's a book that master's us. The moment we think we've got it figured out, we've stopped reading it properly."***

***You see, love isn't built through obligation; it's built through relationship.*** Think about it... You don't fall in love with someone by spending five minutes with them every morning because you have to. You fall in love by spending time together because you want to. The same is true with God's story. We don't learn to love it by forcing ourselves through it. ***We learn to love it by discovering that it's where we meet God Himself.***

*In the beginning, the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.*  
[John 1:1]

When we read the Bible, we're not just reading about God; we're encountering God Himself.  
***Jesus IS the Word made flesh.***

So, when we approach the Bible like medicine we're trying to choke down, we're missing the whole point. We're not just reading an ancient text or some moral instruction manual; we're meeting with the living God. *We're spending time with Jesus Himself.*

// PRIMARY TEXT: Psalm 1:1-3

<sup>1</sup>*Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. <sup>2</sup>But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. <sup>3</sup>They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do. [Psalm 1:1-3]*

**Notice that word in verse 2... *delight*.** Not “endure” or “obligation” or even “force themselves through.” They delight in God’s story.

**When this Psalm was written, God’s “law” [Hebrew: *torah*] didn’t just mean rules and regulations.** Torah means “instruction” or “teaching.” **It was God’s wisdom for how to live well.** It included stories, songs, prayers, and practical guidance. It was instructions for life from a loving Father. In other words, it was God’s story about how life is meant to be lived. *It still is.*

The image of the tree is powerful in ancient Eastern culture. In a largely desert climate, a tree planted by streams of water wasn’t just surviving; it was *thriving*. While other trees withered in the heat, this tree remained green, fruitful, and stable.

**Remember from the first week of this series how Jesus related to Scripture?** He didn’t just read the story, He lived it, breathed it, found His identity in it. In Matthew 4, when Satan tempted Him, Jesus responds, *“People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*

**For Jesus, God’s story wasn’t just about information; it was nourishment.**

*But they delight in the law of the LORD...*

Here’s what delight actually looks like... The Hebrew word for “*delight*” means to take pleasure in, to desire, to find joy in. ***It’s the same word in the Bible that is used to describe...***

- A parent delights in their child. [Isaiah 62:4]
- God delights in us. [Isaiah 65:19]
- Finding something so valuable you can’t stop thinking about it.

Delighting in the Lord isn’t about becoming a Bible nerd or impressing people with your theological knowledge. It’s about discovering that God’s story is where we meet God Himself, and where we discover our place in His ongoing narrative.

**When we learn to love God’s Word, we learn to live God’s way.**

## // LEARNING TO LOVE THE STORY OF GOD

*So how do we get there?*

*How do we move from reading the Bible like medicine to learning to love the story?*

*Let me give you four practical ways.*

### 1. READ

**Start small...** If you've never read the Bible regularly, don't feel intimidated.

- Get a good translation of the Bible.
  - **Formal equivalence [literal]**
    - KJV, NASB, ESV
  - **Dynamic equivalence [thought for thought]**
    - NIV, NLT
  - **Paraphrase [should be used with caution]**
    - The Message
- Start with one of the Gospels, John, Mark, or try the book of James.
- Don't try to read the entire Bible in 30 days.
- Consistency beats intensity.

**Remember, we're learning to love this story, not just consume it.** Pick one Gospel and read just one story at a time. Try reading the same Psalm for a whole week.

Jesus said, *"Whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much."* **Small steps lead to big changes.** Consistency beats intensity every time.

### 2. REFLECT

Jesus compared the Word of God to bread. If that's the case, then ***I'd encourage you to approach reading the Bible as you would a meal, slow down and savor it.*** There's a difference between wolfing down fast food in your car and savoring a meal at your favorite restaurant. ***When you read God's story, don't rush.***

*As you read, ask questions like...*

- What word or phrase stands out to me?
- What is God highlighting here?
- What is this teaching me about God's character?
- How does this part of the story connect to the bigger narrative?
- Where do I see myself in this story?

Jewish culture had a practice called “*haga*,” which means to meditate, ponder, and imagine. It’s the same word used in the text I read earlier in Psalm 1...

*<sup>2</sup>But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. [Psalm 1:2]*

***The Bible’s call for us to meditate on His Word is consistent throughout Scripture...***

*Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. [Joshua 1:8]*

*I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. [Psalm 119:15]*

*I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. [Psalm 77:12]*

***For some of you, the word “meditate” can be a loaded term.*** Eastern meditation is focused on looking inward and emptying your mind. That’s not what I’m implying, and it’s not what the Bible means when it tells us to meditate on God’s Word.

Hebrew meditation, “*haga*,” is about looking outward to God and filling your mind with the thoughts of God.

*And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. [Philippians 4:8]*

***We see Mary, the mother of Jesus, doing this very thing on the night when Jesus was born.***

Luke tells us in his gospel that she “*treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*” She didn’t just collect the information; she reflected on it.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who literally died for his faith, described this beautifully: “*Just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept that as they are said to you, accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did. That is all. That is meditation.*”

### **3. RESPOND**

***This isn’t just about reading; it’s about having a conversation with Jesus.*** Talk to God about what you’re reading. Ask questions, confess, give thanks. Let what you read shape how you pray. When God’s story really connects with us, we can’t help but respond.

- Pick one thing you read and try to live it out that day.
- Share something you learned with someone else.
- Let Scripture become your prayer language.
- **Journaling...** Writing things down matters more than you think. Your journal doesn’t have to be fancy, just honest.

***When we learn to love God's Word, we learn to live God's way.***

<sup>22</sup>***But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. [James 1:22]***

#### **4. REST**

***Sit quietly and let God speak to your heart.*** This might be the hardest step for us because we're not used to silence. This is where we move from just knowing about God to actually knowing God.

***How do we hear God's voice?***

***The number one way God speaks is through His Word, the Bible.*** This isn't just one option out of many... this is His PRIMARY voice, and it always will be.

***Because any other way we think we're hearing God must align with what He's already said in Scripture.*** The Bible is our measuring stick, our filter, our foundation.

The goal of reading the Bible isn't to check off a religious box; it's to have a conversation with Jesus. ***Even 5 minutes a day with the Bible can tune your ears to hear God's voice.***

Peter Greig puts it perfectly, ***"The Bible is God's first language. Everything else is a whisper. So if we want to hear God clearly, we need to learn His primary language."***

**// CLOSING**

***When we learn to love God's Word, we learn to live God's story.***

So, here's my challenge for us... ***For the next week, don't just read the Bible, learn to love the story of God.***

- The Bible Project [Resource]

Pick a gospel, maybe start with John or Mark, it's the shortest. Read just one story at a time. Ask God to help you taste, savor, and digest what He's saying to you. Ask Him to show you our place in His ongoing story.

Remember, the goal isn't to become Bible experts. The goal is to become people who flourish, individuals, families, and a church community that bears fruit because we're connected to the source of life and rooted in the greatest story ever told.

This story isn't just ancient history. It's not just information about God. ***It's God's ongoing invitation to find our place in His work of making everything new.***