

CHRISTIAN HEADS, HEARTS, AND HANDS

ARTICLES TO FORM US AS FOLLOWERS OF "THE WAY"

Don't Just Read Your Bible: 12 Ways to Go Deeper

When we talk about spending time in God's Word, we usually say "read your Bible!" But that doesn't mean you always just pick up the Bible and read a chapter – here are a few other creative ways to soak in Scripture.

1. Read it quickly

I've written before about reading through the Bible in 90 days. It's a great way to get a view of how the whole story of Scripture fits together. Or, you can pick one book and read through it in one sitting, even if it means you have to skim. YouVersion has multiple 90 day reading plans, or even 60 or 30 day if you're up for a challenge.

2. Read it slowly

Pick one book and read one chapter or just a small passage every day. Linger over every word. Make notes. Notice key words and themes. Look up things you don't understand. This would be good to do with one of the four gospels.

3. Listen to it

You may struggle to find time to sit down and pore over your Bible, but you probably have plenty of time where your hands are busy but your brain is not. Whether you're driving or doing dishes, make use of an audio Bible – YouVersion has several audio options, or you can check out the Dwell app. I like to listen to longer narrative books that keep me interested in the story – like Genesis or 1 & 2 Kings.

4. Study it

Go a little deeper than you can just by reading. There are so many great resources out there to help you start studying – just pick a study that will actually dig into a book of the Bible, not just have you look up a few verses to back up a lot of inspirational fluff. I recently joined an online Bible Study Fellowship group, which would be a great place to start for anyone who is new to Bible study.

5. Memorize it

In my opinion, memorizing Scripture is one of the more underrated spiritual disciplines in modern Christian culture. Committing large portions of Scripture to memory has been such a blessing in my spiritual life – not just to be able to recite them, but because the repetition of memorizing brings clarity to otherwise difficult passages. Start with some key verses, then work up to longer passages or even whole books. A few of the Psalms are very short and very useful – 1, 4, 23, and 46, for example. If you want to tackle a whole book, a short NT epistle is a good place to start.

6. Meditate on it

Take a few verses, sit down in a quiet place, and spend a few minutes focusing your heart and mind on the truth in those verses. Choose something that will focus you on the character of God, (Revelation 4:11), something that gives you hope and strength (Isaiah 43:1-2), or something that will help you be more Christlike (Galatians 5:22-23).

7. Pray through it

If you don't know what to pray, pray God's words back to Him. Use one of the prayers in Scripture, like the one Jesus teaches in Matthew 6, or a Psalm that's written directly to God. Or pray through one of the passages where Paul tells a church what he prays for them, such as Ephesians 1:15-23.

8. Write about it

Start with journaling your thoughts and observations about whatever passage you're reading or studying. It may even be helpful to copy some of the text itself. Simply writing it for yourself will be helpful for learning, but if you think it would be helpful for others, you can try to turn it into something shareable. Speaking of which...

9. Discuss and share it

Whether it's a one-on-one discussion with a friend, a blog post, or teaching a Sunday school class, sharing what you've learned in Scripture reinforces it in your own mind. It forces you to express your knowledge in precise language, rather than having a vague feeling that you know what the passage means.

10. Live it

These last three are a bit different, and they all have to do with not being hypocrites. If what you're finding in the Bible has no effect on your life, you're missing something. Every time you come to the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to change your heart through the Word. That doesn't mean you will find a specific point of application every time you read or study the Bible, but you will be building a foundation of truth in your heart whether you feel it or not.

11. Delight in it

The Bible is not a list of facts or commandments or historical data. The Bible is the living and powerful Word of God, our greatest source of hope and joy and comfort. It is more to be desired than gold and sweeter than honey, water for our thirsty souls and light in the darkness. We don't study and soak in it for academic achievement, but to know God better. We must not let our mental dedication to the truth of God's Word become detached from a heartfelt devotion to God Himself – which leads to the last point:

12. Don't worship it

Yes, the Bible is pure, holy, and true. Yes, it is the infallible Word of God. Yes, it is the only way to know God. But it is not God.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day could have checked all the boxes on this list. Yet they totally missed the point. In John 5:39-40 Jesus calls them out for this, saying: *“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”*

The Bible exists to tell us about Jesus, the Son of God who became a man to save us from our sins by dying on the cross and rising again. Read the Bible, study the Bible, meditate on the Bible – but worship Jesus.