

Biblia Part 3

Helps for Bible Interaction

Part One Learning How to Read the Bible (Ryan Bedwell)

Part Two The Bible and Prayer (Luke Knight)

Part Three Bible Interaction Techniques (Doug Smith)

Part One - Learning How to Read the Bible (Ryan Bedwell)

First up – this book is an ancient collection of writings from many different generations, different countries, different writing styles and for different purposes. This alone makes the Bible a little daunting. Where do we start?

Since the Bible is such a diverse book, it is helpful to not only understand the words that you are reading, but also the genre, style and context of what we're reading. So how do we do this?

- The first place to start is collecting basic information about what you are reading. This can be found in many places, but let me suggest two places, a study bible (which has notes at the beginning of each book), or online, sites such as bible.com or biblegateway.com
- I would also suggest a book, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Fee, Stewart). Many of our pastors have read this book, and refer back to it as it is a strong explanation of how to read scripture.

There are five genres of scripture that I want to give you a quick overview of:

Reading narrative.

Let's start with narrative. Narrative is easy, kind of. Narrative is the telling of story, which is the largest part of scripture. Most of us are used to narrative so we find it fairly easy to interpret meaning and application from narrative.

Reading letters.

We also get to read letters in the Bible. The New Testament is primarily written through the use of letters from one person to another person or group of people. When reading letters it is good to identify who wrote the letter if possible, and who they were writing to. After that, ask yourself “What is the writer trying to say to the recipient of the letter?”

Reading poetry.

I struggle with poetry. Let’s just say that while Luke is writing Haiku’s, I am thinking about whether my motorbike needs an oil change. Poetry has not, and is not, my favorite thing. Having said that, poetry in scripture may be where I experience God the most. Poetry in scripture often reveals wisdom, worship and contemplation. So how do we read it? While, the first is to identify it. Know when you are reading poetry. The poetry of the Bible was written with imagination, so read it with imagination as well!

Reading prophesy.

The prophetic books of the Bible can also be daunting to tackle. The problem is that we often do not understand “why” they were written. The following may be a touch simplistic but hopefully helpful to those who struggle with reading their Bibles. When you are reading a prophetic book, the prophet is not just “making stuff up”. His pronouncements are not purposeless. The role of the prophet was to remind Israel of the covenant, the agreement, that they made with God, as his people. The prophet reminds Israel of the blessings, good stuff, that will happen if they adhere to the agreement they made with God. The prophet also reminds Israel of the curses, that’s the bad stuff, that will happen if they do not follow that agreement.

Reading the Law.

One of the most difficult parts of the Bible for Christians to read tends to be the Law. The Law is primarily contained in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. There are over 600 commandments for the Israelites to keep. These

commandments were given so that Israel could show their loyalty to God. So how do we as 21st century Christians read the law? We read the law by remembering that we live under a new agreement found in the New Testament. However, we read the Law of the Old Testament because it reveals God's justice, love, and shows his mercy.

Practical

Finally, let's get really practical and let me share with you a few things that I have done to fall in love with the Bible.

The most effective thing that I have ever done is committing myself to reading the Bible every day and creating the time to actually do it. For me, this happens first thing in the morning. I get up and I grab my Bible. Do not underestimate the significance of commitment and discipline. Although your motivation for reading the Bible should be love for God and wanting to get to know him; committing to do it and disciplining yourself to do it are important steps.

I would also encourage you to use a Bible reading plan. This can be one that is pre-made, or you can make one for yourself, but having a plan makes diving into scripture less tedious. It is kind of like making supper. If you have to think about it every day it gets tiresome, if you make a weekly or monthly plan so that you don't have to think about what you will make each day, it makes it much more enjoyable.

Follow what you are interested in. A formational time in my understanding of the Bible is when I took a year to read the Bible chronologically. The organization of the Bible does not follow the order of when things happened. This can make it confusing. When I understood when things happened and in what order, scripture came alive. I would suggest you do the same. Follow your interest in themes as well. If you are going through a time of grief, spend time reading about times of grief in scripture. If you are thinking about social justice, spend time understanding what scripture says about it.

Finally, use your imagination. Ponder what the scripture says and meditate on what that could mean, both in terms of knowledge of God, but also practically.

The Bible was inspired by God who is unimaginably creative. Let's use our God given creativity to try to understand it.

Part Two – The Bible and Prayer (Luke Knight)

Introduction

- As we said last week, the Bible and prayer can't be divorced.
- The scriptures tell us whom we're praying to, and this "whom" (the Spirit of God) illuminates and animates the words we read.
- So, let's look at two ways where the Bible and prayer coincide.

Meditation

- Scriptural meditation simply means that we reflect on the meaning of the text and invite the Spirit to encourage, convict and direct us through the text.
- Martin Luther would pray and read the Bible twice daily, in the morning and the evening. He used a method of Biblical meditation to "warm up" before he prayed each day.
 - He would begin with reading a short passage. For example: Matthew 11:28-30 *"Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest..."*
 - Lesson – thinking on and exploring the meaning of the text.
 - Adoration – worshiping God through the meaning of the text as it reveals his character.
 - Confession – recognizing and repenting of anything the Spirit shows us through the text and receiving God's grace.
 - Petition – asking God to help us grow in what the text has taught us by his Spirit.
- This method uses the Word of God to direct our prayers, rather than our often-wayward emotions, complicated situations and distracted selves. It's an anchor.

Praying the Bible

- There are a number of ways to pray the words of Bible. These are two tried and tested methods.
- Improvising or “Riffing” with the Lord’s Prayer
 - When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray he gave them this prayer,
 - Similar to Scriptural meditation we can use the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6.9-13, Luke 11.2-4) as a framework to see our hearts re-ordered.
 - After each part of the prayer we pause and elaborate and improvise with it in our own words.
 - We think on and thank God for being our Heavenly Father.
 - We consider first God’s Kingdom and broader mission in the world, and align ourselves with that, heeding Jesus’ words to “Seek first God’s Kingdom and he will take care of your other needs” (Matthew 6.33).
 - We bring our needs before God, our “daily bread” and look to him to provide for us.
 - We embrace God’s grace for ourselves, and prayerfully remember that we get to extend grace to others just as God has to us.
 - Finally, we ask God to guide us in his ways, away from temptation and sin, and show us how to live in his Kingdom of grace.
 - We work in our own lives, concerns, confessions, praises and hopes. It may take some getting used to, but slowly praying through these words align our hearts with God and bring a right balance to our prayers.

- Praying the Psalms
 - The Psalms are artwork. Poems and songs to God. They express emotion and hold truth.
 - Don't know what to pray or how to pray? Try praying a Psalm!
 - The gift in praying the Psalms is they lead us beyond ourselves and into more rounded expression to and meditation on God. They give us *permission* to explore many facets of our humanity and reflect on many facets of God's character. They permit us to explore our varied emotions in God's direction.
 - The Psalms helps us pray what we might not naturally find ourselves praying depending on our current emotions or circumstances.
 - They help overly optimistic people lament and express pain, disappointment and heartache when they otherwise might shy away from it.
 - They help overly pessimistic rejoice in God's loving-kindness and faithful character, reminding them of the blessings of life in the middle of challenges.
 - They root us, in the best and worst of times, in the truth about God and our need for him, no matter the season.
 - Jesus prayed the Psalms. He prayed Psalm 22 on the cross.
 - When we struggle to pray anything at all, the Psalms become vehicle of expression, guiding us into God's truth and presence.
 - Eugene Peterson says, "The Psalms are the school for people learning to pray."

Part Three Bible Interaction Techniques (Doug Smith)

Bible reading requires us to do more than just read it – we need to do something with it. Some form of interaction (definition: reciprocal action) helps us to not only retain what we have read but also and most importantly - apply it.

While everyone will be different in how they personally interact with the bible the truth is – *the effectiveness of our interaction has everything to do with how the contents of scripture will affect our lives.*

The bible is transformative, but only if we meet its truth with the engagement of our intellect and the action of our hearts. In other words meaningful interaction with scripture influences not only how we think but also how we behave. It is the very reason why God has given us the bible – so that our lives might be constantly renewed, restored and take on the shape of Jesus.

It is in our personal interaction with the bible that we find discover God's personal revelation for us. When we show up, when we meet with Him – we can expect revelation – large or small. That is the nature of His supply of daily bread. It keeps us going!

How do we effectively interact with the bible? First as I have said, we agree to do more than just read it. Some form of reciprocal action is needed. The cool thing is that action is made effective because it is what works best for you, it reflects who you are.

I am going to cover a few suggestions – they are practical, none are new, but each as a reciprocal action to our bible reading will help us go deeper, will help us to hear the word of the Lord for us.

- Underlining
 - You can and should mark/highlight/underline your bible. (mark it up)
 - You underline because it speaks to you in that moment. (let it speak)
 - It will speak to you later as you go back.
 - It helps you to keep reference the thought for later prayer or journaling.

- Taking notes
 - Small notes in margins.
 - Separate notebook better – room to write.
 - Date it.
 - What strikes you about what you have read/Revelation
 - questions, conclusions,
 - Capture it before you forget it.

- Studying / topic / context / word
 - Purchase a commentary (one that suits you).
 - Find a strong on-line resource. Always check its source before you begin.
 - As you read, study at the passage at that moment.
 - Look for context and interpretation.
 - Take notes as you discover, write down your understanding and further questions.
 - Courses, opportunities to learn / TWU
 - Study and scripture reading go hand in hand.

- Discussion – spouse/Life Group

- Talk over what you have learned with someone else.
 - Hear their thoughts/perspectives.
 - Be prepared to learn from others.
 - Note sure? Go deeper. Study some more and ask.
- Memorization
- Read. Write. Repeat. Recall.
 - Write it, read it out loud, revisit it – cards on mirrors
 - Holy Spirit will bring it to mind....
- Sharing scripture
- You may read with someone on your heart.
 - The Lord may give you a scripture for them.
 - If it is edifying, encouraging and meaningful – do it!
 - The power of the word to change your life and the life of others.

What I do

Pray, Read, Seek, Write, Apply, Pray

Discussion Questions

- What did you find helpful or challenging about the teaching this week.
- Did any particular method of Bible reading stand out to you, or interest you to try?
- How will you go forward with Bible interaction now we've talked about it extensively as a church?