

2022 ... A Year of Discipleship

Daily Bible Reading

As Christians, it's a basic statement that we have a high regard for the Bible. We read in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*" Our worship services are filled with Scripture readings and the pastor's weekly sermon involves digging into the Bible and applying a passage to our daily lives. Yet for something so basic to our life with God, George Barna writes in *Data and Trends (2015)* the following:

- 91% of all households in the United States own at least one Bible. The typical American household owns three Bibles.
- 38% of American adults read the Bible during a typical week ... not including when they are at church
- Among those who read the Bible, the average amount of time spent in Bible reading during an entire week is 52 minutes ... roughly 10 minutes per day

While this information is dated, you may have read these statistics and experienced either a twinge of guilt or a swell of pride. You may have thought that it certainly can't be that bad today in 2022. That's not the point. This information is probably worse today than 2015, but what is important for us as disciples is this: If we are going to be following Jesus and imitating Him in what He does, reading God's Word is important for our getting to know our Lord, since we're guaranteed to meet Him in Scripture. Remember, the Bible is a means of grace ... one of the ways God imparts grace and forgiveness into the lives of His people.

1. Read John 20:30-31. Why did God give us the Scriptures?

While many Americans ... especially church-going, worship-attending Americans ... own at least one Bible (possibly three or more), the Bible is rarely opened with the exception of a brief devotion or organized, corporate Bible study. In order to grow as disciples, a new culture needs to be developed which encourages spending time in God's Word on a regular, daily basis.

2. What would be some benefits to spending time daily in God's Word?

It can be easy to object to setting aside time every day for Bible reading. We can point to the amount of time it takes to read significant portions of Scripture. By the way, these are often the same objections we make when it comes to praying every day. Some of the objections that can be raised is that we don't understand what we're reading, don't always agree with what we're reading, or we find that what we're reading directly challenges the way we're living.

The reality is that the Bible is the center of our life together and is foundational to our living as disciples of Jesus. Look at the following passage of Scripture. What do these Words of God teach?

- Exodus 3:14
- Psalm 19:1
- Deuteronomy 6:4
- Matthew 28:18-20
- Galatians 4:6
- John 4:24
- Psalm 90:1-2
- Malachi 3:6
- Psalm 139:1-4
- Matthew 19:26
- Jeremiah 23:24
- Isaiah 6:3
- Deuteronomy 32:4
- 2 Timothy 2:13
- Psalm 145:9
- Exodus 24:6-7
- 1 John 4:8

3. Of the above passages listed, do you have a favorite? If so, which one?
4. In this brief reading in Scripture of the nature of God, what gives you the most comfort? What gives you the most pause for thought?
5. Is there more that you'd like to learn? If so, please let Pastor Paul know for more resources.

One way to dig deep into the Scriptures is to participate in *Lectio Divina* ... Divine Reading. Those who have been participating in the Daily Scripture Writing have already been participating in this. *Lectio Divina* utilizes three aspects – *Lectio*, *Meditatio*, *Oratio*. For a practice let's use Philippians 4:12-13.

Lectio (reading) ... Read Philippians 4:12-13

¹² *I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.* ¹³ *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

Meditatio (mediation) ... Think about these words. What is God saying in these words? Look at the context around the passage (at least the sentence before and the sentence after). Does the context help you understand what God is saying? Write down your thoughts, even if they are bullet point notes.

Oratio (prayer) ... Pray this passage. How is the Holy Spirit leading your prayers? You can pray either conversationally or through journaling.

If you want to know more about the general text that you're reading, the Bible Project (www.bibleproject.com) is a fairly solid resource. A first resource is the Bible Project's series, *How to Read the Bible* (www.bibleproject.com/explore/how-to-read-the-bible). The Bible Project also offers overviews of all 66 biblical books (www.bibleproject.com/explore/book-overviews). As you're reading through the Bible, you may want to watch an overview to gain a better understanding of what the biblical author is addressing.

By engaging in reading the Bible every day, the disciple hears the heart of God and is moved to either correct wayward behavior or be strengthened in following Jesus. The goal is for disciples to create an environment where turning to the Bible is as natural as browsing your favorite Web site, reading your favorite book, or watching a show on TV.