

How do we have a satisfying devotional time in God's Word?

THE IMPORTANCE

We get to know people by spending time with them. And we spend time with the people we love. The same is true with God. It's important to spend regular time in the Bible, because God wants us to know Him in Jesus Christ, which is the essence of eternal life (see John 17:3). We are invited to hear the infinite God speaking personally and lovingly to us not only about Himself, but also about how to view the world that He made and how to live in it the way He designed us to.

.....

THE BIBLE

"The Holy Bible" just means the book set apart from every other book in the world. The Bible is called "God's Word" because it testifies to itself and to us that it is inspired by God and is true (see Jn. 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pt.1:19-21). Although there are 66 books, it's called one book because it tells one story about God's saving plan for the world in Jesus Christ. Therefore, to miss Christ is to miss the point of every story and passage in Scripture (see John 5:39, Luke 24:27,44-45).

.....

THE CHALLENGE

Yet one of the greatest challenges for many Christians is learning how to have an intimate and satisfying time with God in His Word. We open up our Bibles, but we often do not know where to start. We may try a Bible reading plan, but it feels dry, like we're just going through the motions. We read a few passages, but quickly close our Bibles and get on with our day without a real sense that we've met with God or have any idea of how to apply what we've read. In our minds we've "done our duty," but personal devotions are not a way to get God on our side. God is already 100% on our side in Jesus Christ. Devotions are a way to be reminded of that gospel truth and to learn how we should walk worthy of the gospel in our lives.

.....

THE GUIDE

So, what practical steps can we take in order to have a devotional time that is informed by the gospel and is life transforming? If we're not intentional about how we read a text, then it just becomes about getting the reading done instead of getting the truth of the gospel deep in our hearts. On the back of this page is a guide that is just one way we can be more intentional in our devotional time with the Lord. It follows the acronym A.B.I.D.E.

“Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

ASK - Begin by thanking God for His Word and asking Him to, “Open up your eyes to see wonderful things from it” (Ps.119:18). Ask the Lord to make the Bible real to you so that you can know Him better in the circumstances you find yourself in. Then ask, “God, what are you teaching me about Yourself from this passage that should cause me to praise You?” Then ask, “God, what are you teaching me about myself that should cause me to confess and repent?” This is the “Isaiah 6 Cycle” where we see both the King and our sin. It’s also the “putting off” of the old self (see Eph.4:22; Col. 3:9) that the Apostle Paul mentions.

.....

BEHOLD - Next, seek to “behold the Lamb.” Take time to be still and fix the eyes of your heart on the person and work of Christ, for by “... Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed” (2 Cor. 3:18). Where is the person or work of Jesus in this text? How has Jesus fulfilled this in my place? Where do I see the truths of the gospel here? This is the “putting on” of the new self, which is Christ (see. Eph.4:24; Col.3:10).

.....

IDENTIFY - Then, seek to identify the lesson(s) that you feel like God is teaching you from the passage. Remember to look at the passage in its context and compare it with other passages in Scripture for more clarity. This is the place where you put on the truth (see Eph.6:14) by narrowing down what you believe God is personally speaking to you about from your time with Him.

.....

DECIDE - Next, seek to be a doer of the Word (see Js.1:22) by deciding some tangible ways to put the truth into action. This is a way to intentionally apply what you’ve heard. We’re not saved by works, but we are saved to works (see Eph.2:8-10). How can you work out what God has been working in? It could be even seeking answers to questions that the text raised for you.

.....

EMBRACE - Lastly, by faith we embrace God’s grace to live this out. This is the benediction piece where we receive not only God’s pardoning grace to cleanse us from sin, but also His empowering grace for godly living. We embrace God’s power as the only means for change and expect Him to work in our lives as we approach the rest of our day. For we are not left to ourselves; Christ sends us into the world with His blessing and Spirit that equips and empowers us for service to others and a life of daily worship unto Him (see Rom.12:1).