



How do we read the Bible in a way that...matters?

We are convinced that regular, frequent Bible reading is essential to the growth of every follower of Jesus. The Bible is, contrary to what many believe, not primarily a book of do's and don'ts. Sure, you find some of those in there, but the Bible is really God's story of His relationship with humankind. In this dramatic story, we meet many people, people with whom we can identify, people who give us little glimpses of ourselves. And situations that challenge us to consider where we might need to grow.

Now if you are thinking that you need a secret decoder ring or a master's in theology to do this, forget it. All it takes is three easy steps: observe, reflect and apply.

Observe

Reading God's story will help us understand Him, our fellow man, and ourselves. Most importantly, it tells us how He wants to include each of us in that story. Reading the Bible isn't like reading your friends' Facebook posts. You gotta take time to think about what you read, to ponder it. Don't just decide quickly what a passage means, put a mental check in the check box, and move on. Take time to look for the nuances of language and consider the cultural context. Imagine yourself in the story as different characters, hearing the inflection in each character's voice; seeing the story from different points of view. That's how you can learn to hear God's "voice" and get to know Him better.

Reflect

God is a mega-genius. His thoughts and ways are so intricate, so beyond ours, that we can read the same passage many times, getting new insights along the way. Pray through what you are reading, asking God what he is communicating to you through this process. It is unlikely that you will hear a booming voice, but in this kind of prayer, God will reveal to you things about Himself, about life, and about you.

Apply

The whole point of this exercise is that...well, it's not an exercise after all. It's your life. And like us all, you want a better one. Healthier. Fuller. Maybe less destructive. More hopeful. Inspired. Real. Whole. When we read the Bible, it causes us to live differently. Not because it's magic, but because it points us to Jesus - the one who does the changing. From the inside out. Naturally. Subtly. Without contrivance or coercion. The Bible has this effect on us. It becomes like that song you can't get out of your head. But not a lame song. The good kind.

So we observe. We reflect. We pray. Then we go and do it. Whatever that might be. Could be an apology. Maybe it's an extra tip. Maybe it's to start a new venture. Maybe it's to love a Denver Broncos fan. Whatever. But here's the point: when we do it, we'll find that we are kinda doing the things Jesus did. We're living the way Jesus lived.

Lastly, Jesus doesn't change us into some Christian cookie-cutter mold. Or into "THAT GUY" you can't stand. Listen, there are no alien abductions here. When Jesus has our life, he changes us more into...ourselves. So, if you're smart...you'll stay smart but he'll just make you wise. If you're a thinker...he'll make you thoughtful. If you're a geek...you'll become even geekier because geeks are cool.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Jesus, in John 10:10