

Bible Reading for Growth

Have you ever opened the Bible, read it, and then wondered, “What did I just read?” Many of us have. Although there is much in the Bible that can be difficult to understand, God—the Holy Spirit—desires to reveal the truth of His Word to us as we read it. Ultimately, God desires that we read the Bible for growth. Like with anything, reading the Bible in such a way that we spiritually grow through our times of reading takes practice.

For most of my life, I haven’t enjoyed reading. In fact, most of what I’ve read over the course of my life, I’ve struggled to comprehend. This has been especially true when I’ve read the Bible. For me, I’ve realized that reading can be a simple act, but it takes intentionality. I need to know what I’m looking for.

I realize that others may struggle with reading the Bible for growth in a similar manner as me. Therefore, I put together ten suggestions that have been helpful for me, which God has used to transform my life through reading the Bible. There is nothing magical about these ten suggestions, and others may be able to offer different suggestions that may be helpful too. All in all, these steps have proved foundational to spiritual growth in my Bible reading, and I pray they would be an encouragement to you as well.

1. Choose a text / pericope. A pericope is simply a section of Scripture that is joined together as one story, narrative, teaching, or contextual idea. Usually, Bible publishers provide section headings at the beginning of each new pericope.

2. Pray. Once you’ve chosen a text or pericope to read, pray. Ask God to open your spiritual eyes to see and understand the context and meaning of the text.

3. Read it. Read it again. Read the text as many times as it takes to gain a basic understanding of what it’s saying, in the context of the passage. Some people can do this with one or two passes. Others may need to read the text many times.

4. Why did God put this text in the Bible? In every pericope, there’s always a problem, issue, concern, warning, or evidence of our fallen nature. What is it? It may be stated or implied. What is God trying to tell the people to whom the text was originally written?

5. What truth does this text tell us about God, whether *who He is* or *what He does*? Does it convey something about His identity, character, nature, or essence (i.e. holiness, sovereignty, love, compassion, faithfulness, justice)? Or, does it speak about His divine actions, ways, or works (i.e. something God actually did or promises to do)?

6. What does this text tell us about *us, as people*? Is there a command, promise, or something we're called to believe? What is the application? What are we supposed to do, trust, or believe? (Sometimes this is stated explicitly, while other times it's implicit).

7. In the pericope, how does the truth about God relate to the application? What is the relationship between God and His people? Does the truth about God empower, motivate, cause, or lead to the application in some way? In what way(s) are the truth and application relevant to one another?

8. How does this text lead to Jesus? Does the text talk about Jesus directly? In what way does the application of the text require a perfect life, sacrifice, savior, or deliverer? What did Jesus do, or what is it in the nature of Christ that fulfills the problem or issue for which this text was written?

9. Pray. Thank God for who He is and what He's done for you. Ask God to help you trust, believe, or do what He's asking of you in the text. Ask God to help you to trust Christ and His work of grace as the ultimate solution to your problems and issues. Praise God for the way that He fulfills the application of the text in your life.

10. Journal or Share. One of the best ways to both remember what you've learned and pass it along to others is to communicate it. Consider journaling some of the things you've learned while reading and praying about this biblical text. Also, sharing what God has taught you with someone else is an excellent way to pass along the Good News of Christ to others.

Enjoy seeing the glory of God through Christ as you read the Bible!

—Pastor Mike