

The Do's and the Don'ts of Reading the Word

Last week I shared research from the Barna group that 95% of Christian either never read the Bible or read it less than 4 times a year.

I was in that 95 %. Reading the Bible for me used to be impossible.

- Reading the Bible was an obligation to prove I was a Christian.
- Reading was like 3rd grader trying to choke down broccoli for dinner.
- There was no interest, there was no satisfaction,
- We would have memory verses as part of Sunday school, and I would only find the shortest verses (Jesus wept John 11:35).
- My relationship with the Bible felt like an arranged marriage to me
 - o I didn't choose it, it didn't choose me, but we are stuck together

But Now...

- Every time I open the Word, it's like a treasure hunt
- Every time I open the Word, it's like I come into signal
- Every time I open the Word, my life is challenged.
- Every time I open the Word, I am inspired to be better.

How'd that come to be? I had two transformations.

- 1) I stopped trying to love reading the word and started to love the Author.
 - a. You will never love reading the word until you love the author.
- 2) I changed several small (but significant) ways I read the Bible. That's what I want to share tonight.

The do's and don'ts of reading the Bible. Learn how to get the most out of reading the Bible without getting burned out or bored.

Don'ts:

1: DON'T Wait for a Crisis to Read the Bible

If the only time you ever read the Bible is when you have a crisis, you are doing it wrong.

- I am not saying you shouldn't read the bible when you are desperate, just don't let that be the only time you do read it.
- Unless I had a crisis, a breakup or was incredibly stressed, I wouldn't read the Bible
- It essentially declares that unless you are desperate, you don't need the Bible.

I also would read the Bible in response to guilt.

- **When I felt bad about something, I would read the Bible in order to get back into good graces with God.**
 - o When I got in trouble as a kid, you know what I did? I would be extra helpful, around the house. I would do the dishes, I would vaccum, I would be wiling to help.
 - o God is not unhappy with you if you don't read the Bible. So reading it isn't going to make him more happy with you.

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2: DON'T Read the Bible With a Bad Attitude

Don't come to the word with a bad attitude.

- Bad attitudes discount good deeds
- My 3 year old has to say sorry to our 1 year old son, she can have the worst attitude.
 - o She will say the words but not because she wants to

God gets no pleasure you do things out of obligation

- 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 – Do not give are offering if you attitude sucks. If you feel reluctant and under compulsion, the bible says not to give.

Bad attitudes blind biblical revelation

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3: DON'T Have Your Smart Phone Near You

When you read the Bible, put down your smart phone and put it out of range.

- All the distractions in the world have been consolidated to a single device you in pocket
- Prohibit yourself from wandering, browsing or glancing at facebook, Instagram, email, the news.
- Once you get off track for a moment, it is so difficult to get back into the love.

You probably can't read the Bible because you cant put your phone down longer enough to read it.

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4: DON'T Binge read the Bible

It works for Netflix but doesn't work when it comes to the Bible.

There is such thing as too much of a good thing. If you have too much of a good thing, you might not enjoy it anymore.

- I loved cool ranch dorritos. I would love to eat them.
- One time I ate a whole bag all by myself.

- I threw up cool ranch doritos in the bathtub.
- To this day, I cannot eat cool ranch doritos

There is an unspoken expectation that I need to read an entire chapter whenever I read the word.

- “I just need to read a chapter a day!” Don’t do that.
- Just because you missed last year doesn’t mean you need to catch up.

Read the Bible according to your appetite. Even if it’s one verse.

- Give yourself permission to only read a single sentence in the Bible.

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5: DON’T Limit Your Reading to The Bible.

There is a notion you need to only read the Bible. I suggest also reading books alongside your reading with the Bible.

For example, I did a series on women and the Bible.

- I would read the Bible and just pass that a woman touches Jesus’ cloak
- I would by pass the story of the woman at the well.
- I didn’t realize until I was reading a book about women that Jesus was breaking all the cultural laws to be even touched by a woman.

There are fantastic books that you can read alongside the Bible.

- If it reveals God’s truth, explains his heart, then read it.
- Sometimes it takes someone else explaining a word that helps me get the word into my heart.
- If another person’s explanation helps me understand, know and integrate a word into my life, isn’t that what matters?

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6: DON'T Read the Bible Unprepared

Be prepared for God to speak to you. Be prepared to meet with the king.

- The Old Testament, when God would move so powerfully, the Bible would create monuments, towers of rocks to remember.
- When you read the Bible, remember that you are connecting with the King! He might say some interesting things to you.
 - o You might want to write them down or remember them.

When I read the word, I am prepared for God to speak to me.

- I have favorite memory verses, I have quotes, I have working message ideas, I have things I want to study more later.

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DO's

1: DO Read the Bible in the Morning

The most transformational way you can read the Bible is to read it when you have a blank mind.

- You are the most capable of being transformed when reading the Bible in the morning.
 - o You are least stressed
 - o You are the least distracted
 - o You are most available to be transformed

What made reading the Bible impossible and boring all the time is that I was trying to read it in between lots of other interesting things.

- Do I go to lunch with someone or read the Bible
- Do I watch the game or read the Bible
- Do I read the Bible or stay a bit longer at work
- Do I read the Bible or go to bed
- When you put the Bible in competition for your attention mid day or evening, the Bible will always lose.

When I read in the morning, it's sets the aim for my day. It sets the direction, the tone and the trajectory of my day.

- Instead of having the bible be my counselor to cool me down from a tough day, it turns into my coach and helps me strategize my day

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2: DO – Slow Down When you Read the Bible

Take time to reflect on what things means. Slow down and take notice of the details

- Jed and Aaron – riding bikes and motorcycles – you notice so much more stuff
- Hidden in the scriptures are endless clues
- Mike Mellott – 30 days in one chapter. That chapter has 24 verses.
- When you look for it, you will find it. Most people never think to look beyond the surface.
- 1 Peter 1 – *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*

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3: DO – Read until you receive

I don't have a reading plan. I don't have a goal. I don't have a commitment. I don't have a minimum required amount.

- I am not out to win a reading award, I am trying to hear from the King.
- I read until I receive.
- Even if that is one sentence.

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4: DO – Record, Memorize and Synthesize

When I read, I have 3 documents open.

- Interesting verses by category, or topic
- Spiritual truths that come to mind, that I read or that are shared with me
- Working messages for future topics.

Remember how we shouldn't wait for Crisis to read the Bible?

When I face challenges, I don't need to hunt the scriptures. I bring them to remembrance.

- John 14:26 – The Holy Spirit will bring to remembrance what he has said to you.
- When you only read when you are in Crisis, you miss the Word that would have possibly prevented the situation in the first place.

The words I remember and memorize are my guard.

- I don't have passages to make me feel better for what I have done, I have passages that guide me from making the mistake in the first place.

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5: DO – Read what is most enjoyable

Do not be afraid of developing favorite areas, sections or topics in the Bible

- Some people like revelation, others like the OT, others like ephesians
- Study whatever is most interesting to you. Even a topic!
- I took time to find every exchange Jesus had with a woman

Each year I seem to have new favorite topics that pique my interest

- Is there a theology of healing? Why healing happens sometime and not others?
- Then it became Grace, the goodness of God and Daddy God
- Theology of women in ministry
- Then it became the Will of God and God's sovereignty