

SIT
WITH
ME

AN INVITATION TO
MEET WITH JESUS
IN GOD'S WORD



A FAITHPATH RESOURCE



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READING INTENTIONALLY

WEEK FIVE

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READING INTENTIONALLY

Even though both of my parents are avid readers, I did not fall in love with reading until late in life. Like many kids, I only read what I was forced to read, and even then, I read reluctantly and without joy. I remember skimming even the “Cliff Notes” version of Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* in high school. I hated it. Maybe this is a bad example because I think most people hated that one (no offense Emily). I had to answer test questions from a very high vantage point, if you know what I mean.

Later I accidentally discovered fiction books in the adventure and “thriller” genre. I believe these were the very first books, besides textbooks, that I read cover to cover. In my adolescent wisdom, I considered these far greater than the so-called “classics.” They had movement, excitement, drama and color. I quickly began to disdain any literature that was “old,” even if I did so unconsciously.

I had also never read the Bible at this point in my life. Because it classified as “old,” I was not interested. Sadly, many in every generation and from all backgrounds have fallen into this same reading trap. “Since the Bible is so old, it can’t be very relevant to my life now”... or so it goes. Even when we overcome this and begin to read the Bible, many do so with lingering symptoms of skepticism. This is perhaps why many do not enjoy reading the Scriptures or read them without purpose or intention.

Reading God’s Word is quite different from reading Tolkien, Lewis, King, Crichton or Jane Austen. Masterful fiction authors are telling a human story, invented and ornamented. Some details are there simply for color, ambience, and movement. Some are boring, nonsensical or completely peripheral, often from authors paid by the word.

On the other hand, the Bible is both a human book and a Divine book. That is, it was written by human authors, but is divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit of God working through those authors. This makes the Bible unique among all literature. This also means that no single part, indeed not even a single word, of the Scriptures is without meaning and value. There is no detail that is peripheral or useless.

However, there is also something similar about reading Tolkien and the Bible because they are both literature. As literature, the Bible tells a story that is complex, with a beginning, middle and end, finished with quite a few side and back-stories. Because of this, you would not do well to consistently pick a reading spot at random. Just the same, much is lost by jumping into the third book of *The Lord of the Rings* without any concept of what comes before.

This week we will focus on only two passages, both from the Apostle Paul. Your goal is to combine what you have learned and experienced for the past month in God's Word and take it to a very important next step: to read with purpose, intention, and deliberateness.

Reading the Bible intentionally can happen in many ways. You can choose a passage, book or psalm and reread it many times over many days. This is a simple way to "write the Word on your heart," working toward memorizing it and understanding it as deeply as you can.

Choosing a particular book to read and reread is a great way to start reading with greater intention. Consider an overlapping plan for reading through a narrative book like Genesis, Acts or the Gospel of Matthew. This will allow you to slow down and keep track of both the overall context and the individual details. Consider a similar plan for reading through a New Testament letter like Romans or Hebrews. These argument-based letters are built like narrative but use different tools.

You can also choose to read the book of Psalms in much the same way. While the individual psalms can share similar language and themes, they are individual units and stand independent of each other in that way.

If you are interested in a study of a particular character (David, Peter, Esther, Nehemiah) or characteristic (an attribute of God, a fruit of the Spirit, a particular sin, a particular practice of holiness, etc.), this should not be intimidating or difficult. The concordance at the back of your Bible can get you started (and the internet can easily help identify passages to read). Read slowly. Read prayerfully. Worship as you read. Read with intention.

INSIGHTS

CRITICAL TRUTHS FOR READING THE BIBLE

(ADAPTED FROM RICK WARREN⁵)

- To understand God's Word in truth, you must have personal faith in Jesus and the Holy Spirit of God, whom is given to every believer. These are absolutely essential.
- God is the main character of the Scriptures. They are ultimately about Him. Jesus is the chief hero of the Bible. The story line of the Scriptures focuses on Jesus.
- The Bible is its own best commentary: interpret unclear passages in light of the clear passages. Let the Bible explain itself.
- God inspires the whole and each individual part of Scripture. This means that every single word is important. No part of God's Word is wasted or useless.
- You must read the New Testament with the Old Testament in mind; Read the Old Testament with the New Testament in mind. They are not two separate stories, nor do they describe two different Gods. The Old Testament is the stage upon which the New Testament is played.
- Interpret personal experience based on Scripture, not the other way around.

WEEK FIVE

READING INTENTIONALLY

MEMORY VERSE

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Commit this scripture to memory. This is a powerful way to constantly engage God's Word and write it on your heart.

Consider writing it on a post-it or note-card and putting it in a prominent place like your bathroom mirror or car dashboard. Work on it each day. This simple practice reminds you to dwell on God's Word constantly.



WEEK FIVE / DAY ONE

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your Word."

Read **Romans 5**, the whole chapter. You may read it several times.

Think about it in five paragraphs, with breaks after verses 5, 11, 14 and 17.

In your journal, summarize each paragraph with one sentence in your own words. This will be challenging, but work at it.

Close in prayer, thanking God for speaking through His word.

WEEK FIVE / DAY TWO

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

"Make me walk in the path of Your word, for that is where my happiness is found."

Read **Romans 5** again today.

Review your paragraph summaries from yesterday, then read the chapter one more time.

How would you improve or change your summaries?

Identify one truth for which you are thankful from each paragraph?

Close in prayer.

WEEK FIVE / DAY THREE

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

*"The unfolding of Your word gives light.
Let your Word be a lamp to my feet, a
light to my path."*

Read **Philippians 1**.

Work to understand the flow and movement in the chapter.

Write down your personal insights, truths about God and any questions you may have.

Close in prayer, thanking God for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

WEEK FIVE / DAY FOUR

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

*"Your Word, O God, revives me.
It comforts me in all of my troubles."*

Read **Philippians 1** and **2** together.

Work to understand the flow and movement in both chapters.

Write down in your journal personal insights, truths about God and questions you may have.

Close in prayer.

BE FREE

If at any point you fall behind in your daily readings, do not give way to guilt, despair or resignation. Never let yesterday's failure keep you from the beauty God wants to reveal today. His mercies are ever new. His grace is abundant. Just skip ahead and jump right back in. God wants to speak to you right now.

WEEK FIVE / DAY FIVE

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

"You are my hiding place and shield, O God. I wait for Your word. Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live."

Read **Philippians 2** and **3**.

Work to understand the flow and movement in the chapter.

Write down your personal insights, truths about God and any questions you may have.

Close in prayer, thanking God for the gift of the church.

WEEK FIVE / DAY SIX

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

"Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let sin have any dominion over me."

Read **Philippians 3** and **4**.

Work to understand the flow and movement in the chapter.

Write down your personal insights, truths about God and any questions you may have.

Close in prayer.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

Share with your group how you engaged the reading and study this week. Did you sit with Jesus regularly?

How did this study help you explore God's Word more deeply and inspire you to sit with Jesus more consistently?

It has been said that Romans 5 is a central text of study for the Christian who is serious about their Bible. Why do you think someone would say this?

What benefit did you gain from reading Romans 5 over two separate days?

What truths from Romans 5 did you find most powerful

Romans 5 is a transition point from a discussion of salvation to a discussion of holiness and spiritual growth (sanctification). How do you see this shift in the text?

What would you say the book of Philippians is about?

What are some central themes or key words you recognized as you read Philippians?

What benefit did you gain from reading the book of Philippians with some overlap like you did over four days?
Was it helpful? Why or why not?

How did reading the Scriptures more intentionally help you overall?

In what other ways could you read the Bible more intentionally than you have before?

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