

"To Read, or Not to Read?"

That is the Question

Reading is integral to the Christian life. For centuries the dire need of English speaking Christians was to have the Bible translated into English. When a Roman Catholic priest criticized William Tyndale's pursuit of translating the Bible, Tyndale said, "If God spare my life, I will cause a boy who drives the plow to know more of Scripture than you." Through the efforts of men such as John Wycliffe, William Tyndale and countless others, the Word of God was translated into English. Then, with the Reformation, came the urgent need for everyone to be literate, to have the ability to read the Bible. Many schools were born for this very purpose. Today, we have the Bible in English, we are literate, but do we know the Word of God better than the priest of Tyndale's day?

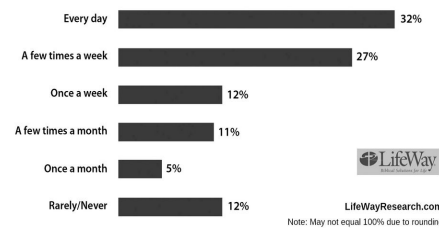
Christians are people of The Book. A non-reading Christian is an oxymoron. Yet, according to LifeWay Research, 1/5 of churchgoers today do not read the Bible at least once a week. The spiritual ramifications of this are disastrous. The Holy Spirit works in our lives through the written Word. To neglect the Word is to quench the Spirit.

Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ." Faith in God comes by "hearing", or reading, the Word of God. Faith comes by the Word not only when we first believe in Jesus, but also as we continue to believe in Jesus. The Christian has never heard, or read enough of Scripture. Each day we are to live by faith, not sight, and faith comes through hearing and reading of Scripture.

Augustine is one of the greatest pastors and theologians the church has ever had. As a young man though he lived in debauchery. Over time, and through the prayers of his mother, the Lord began to convict Augustine of his sin. One day Augustine heard what sounded like children singing, "Take up and read. Take up and read." He took this as a sign from God and picked up the Bible immediately reading the first

How often do you read the Bible?

Among Protestant Churchgoers

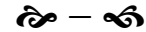


passage that came to his eyes. It was Romans 13:13-14, "Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." These were precisely the words Augustine needed and in that moment he repented of his sin and believed in Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters may we take up and read. For in so doing God will continue to breathe faith and life into our souls.

- Pastor Matt Peery

"Reading"

This issue focuses on the topic of Reading God's Word. Here are some quotations to introduce the topic...



• "The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read."

-Mark Twain

• "A beggar's book outworths a noble's blood."

-William Shakespeare

• "Why, this man is a living Bible! Prick him anywhere—his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God."

-Charles Spurgeon
regarding John Bunyan

"Why Read the Bible?"

If we are honest, we don't read our Bibles enough. We know we should read more. When we read our Bibles, it is usually in small doses. When we do read larger chunks of Scripture, it is usually because we have started a rigorous Bible reading program. Genesis goes well. Exodus is interesting. Leviticus is slow and repetitive. By the time we get to Numbers our determination which started out so strong is deflated. We come across strange stories and tedious details. With enough will power we can keep going a little longer, but it can become a daily struggle. We see a verse about God's word being sweeter than honey, but it is difficult to taste. A Sunday School lesson mentions Scripture "reviving the soul" and "rejoicing the heart," but we feel very little delight. Finally, we hear in a sermon that the Bible is better than having gold or silver. Sometimes, instead of riches, to us it

feels like a weight that is placed on our shoulders. It is a duty that we know should be completed. One more chore to mark off the list.

What is the solution? We long for a day to taste the honey of God's Word, for it to be as great riches to our hearts. We buy journals and devotion books. We may look for a rigid program for help. Some attempt getting up earlier or setting aside a certain time to read. Others try an app that will ring a bell to remind them. All may be good ideas but let's remember a few things. Keep in mind when reading, that the Bible is about God, not us. It does help us, it is for us, but it is not about us. It is primarily God's revelation of Himself and is always pointing us to Christ. Although it is so important to learn and understand the meaning of the sentences and paragraphs, don't stop there. Our goal in reading is not just for more information.

(Continued on Page 2, "Why Read")

Why Read...

(Continued from Page 1)

It isn't there to simply fill in holes in our theology. It is ultimately for God's glory. When we look for God in His word, we will begin to see what He has accomplished, more than what we need to accomplish. We will begin to see His righteousness. We will see the grace He has freely given to sinners – real sinners like us. Then we begin to love Him anew. We will read how our patient God was faithful to His people, even through great rebellion. Then we will meditate on that. We will read and ponder and think about His love for His people. As affection for our Father grows, we will see fresh glimpses of His beauty and splendor. His Spirit will begin to transform us from the inside, not by our following a list of do's and don'ts, but by changing our very hearts. When we pick up our Bibles, we can prayerfully savor this Holy God. His Word will revive our soul and fill our hearts with joy. Then no matter if we read about another slaughtered animal, helpful harlot or a snake on a pole, far from a chore to finish, we will hunger to see Him in all His glory.

-Brother Toby Parker

“Reading: A Love Story”

When Laura and I first started dating, or courting, or whatever you call that strange season in life when two young adults are considering marriage but not yet engaged, we went to a massive book sale. One of the commonalities that had already bonded us together was that we both loved to read. At the sale I expected Laura to want me to stay by her side the whole time. I dreaded the thought of this, not because I did not want to spend time with her, but because I knew she would want to look at children's books for her elementary classroom. I, on the other hand, wanted to peruse the history, theology, and philosophy sections, and leave Curious George to the kiddies. To my astonishment, as soon as we entered the children's section Laura turned to me and said, “You don't have to stay with me. I'll look here and then meet up with you.” I knew then we were a match made in heaven.

I cannot imagine Laura's and my relationship apart from books. Certainly, in the early days of our relationship we watched our fair share of movies. But they added so little to our conversation, and to our growing to know each other. However,

Scripture, and other books as well, caused Laura and I to think about life and discuss life together. They were literally food for our thoughts.

Laura and I met fifteen years ago, and while we have been discussing books the whole time, we have never read the same books. In fact, I would rather be stabbed than read some of the books she reads. Our tastes are different. But this has worked for us. As one of us reads a book we discuss it with the other. Much of our conversation with each other continues to stem from our reading. Now with three children our conversation often centers around the books we are reading to them, including Curious George. And let's be honest, books are more substantive than TV or movies, leading to more substantive conversation. There is something unique in the way reading turns on our minds and our imaginations. One might even say we were meant to be readers. God did reveal Himself to us through a book. And only through that book do we learn of the love God has for us. So, as Deuteronomy 6 says, may God's words be on our hearts. May we teach them diligently to our children, and talk of them when we sit in our houses, and when we walk by the way, and when we lie down, and when we rise.

-Pastor Matt Peery

A Book Review:

Because He Loves Me

by Elyse M. Fitzpatrick
(Reviewed by Mary Malone)

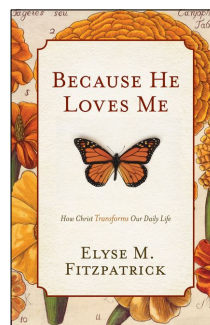
Because He Loves Me by Elyse M. Fitzpatrick has had quite an impact on my walk with God. I picked up the book thinking that I would glean a little insight or get a little motivation to keep going on my Christian walk. The book is so much more than a little insightful. Don't read this book unless you are prepared to spend time thinking and praying. Reading the book has reminded me to see God as more than something I casually think about on Sunday during service.

I have been challenged to reflect on my relationship from a new level of thinking. A question she poses in the book is “What would life be like without a relationship with God? What would you do if you had no more chances?” How can I read that quote and not think of how God has given me more chances than I give others?

How can I read that question and not think about God's mercy and grace in my life?

I have read this book as a personal Bible study and have taken notes from the book as I

have read. There are so many parts of this book that I want to reflect upon and consider as a means of deepening my faith. Fitzpatrick states so well that the answer to every life question can be only be the gospel. Fitzpatrick challenges her reader to consider “Who are we? We are people being transformed by his love.” I must then ask myself the question “Who am I? Am I being transformed by the amazing power of the gospel?” I hope you will read *Because He Loves Me* by Elyse M. Fitzpatrick, the book is spiritually challenging and worth reading!



Recommended Websites for Reading

● <http://biblegateway.com>

Every translation you can think of a click away and several other tools. Explore and enjoy.

● <http://ccl.org>

An incredible online library of historic Christian writings. All available for free.

● <http://online-literature.com>

A large variety of great literature available for free. If you are not accustomed to reading fiction start with the short story *The Student* by Anton Chekhov.

● <https://bibleplan.org>

Tools to help you have a plan in reading the Bible.

“The Power of Words”

Humans are born with the capacity for language, but without the ability. For infants, communication is extremely difficult, consisting of only minimal vocalization in the form of coos and cries. It takes years of mental and physical development before a person can develop the capacity for language into a working ability, and a subsequent lifetime of refinement of that ability to achieve high levels of language performance.

The earliest of my memories, from the time before I knew language, were in the form of pictures, symbols, and impressions. Around the age of 4 or 5, when I began to know and use language, I remember waking up from a dream one night, sensing or faintly seeing a spirit in the window, and I asked, in thought words, “What do you want?” I remember getting a vague answer, not in words but in an impression, “I have something for you to do.” This was exciting, yet a little fearful, and laying there afterwards I wondered if I missed the “something” – did I miss part of the message? What was I supposed to know from this? Thus began my quest to learn what God wants of me.

My granny (my mom's mother) lived with us when I was young until she passed away in my teens. She was my “nanny”, and we were close. She was a strong Christian woman, reading the Bible daily, and I would ask her to read it to me – maybe I could learn that “something.”

Language came slowly to me, and I had difficulty in first and second grades. Thanks to some persistent, kind, and helpful teachers, God granted me the ability of language as I learned to express thoughts and read clearly by the end of second grade. Learning language was exciting because I realized that it overcame the limitations of language-less and simple symbolic thought, opening up a whole new world of ideas and possibilities. I began reading dictionaries, encyclopedias, and the Bible. With these language tools, maybe I could learn that “something.”

These experiences lead me to think about what it might have been like for Adam. We have to wonder at the original creation by God of Adam, when we see a gift of language at the very beginning.

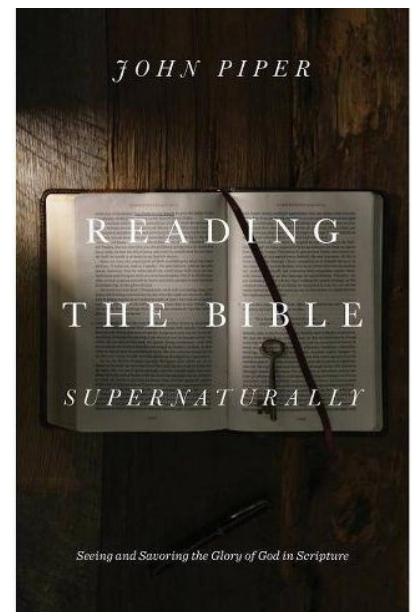
Adam was given not only the capacity for language, but the ability from the start. We see evidence of this in Genesis 2:19-20 where God has Adam name the animals on the day he was created, developing language skills even before God made Eve: “Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.” God created Eve, gifted them with language, and it was a part of their purpose.

At the creation of mankind, God “breathed” life into them (Gen 2:7). In this day, God breathes spiritual life into us through His word, scripture, as Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Also consider Paul's encouragement in Colossians 3:16-17, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Thanks to God for the blessing of being able to speak, sing, read, and write language to praise Him.

What is that “something” God wants of me? In His patient love, God used the gift of words to reveal Himself to me and lead me to trust in Jesus as my savior. God showed me through His Word that my purpose is to “...continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.” (Heb 13:15) Praise Jesus!

-Joe Council

A Book Review:
***Reading the Bible
Supernaturally***
by John Piper
(Reviewed by Pastor Matt Peery)



Reading the Bible Supernaturally is an exceptional and much needed book for the church today.

Piper summarizes his main point this way: “God’s purpose for us in reading the Scripture is not only that we see his glory, and that we savor his glory, but also that we be transformed by this seeing and savoring, so that our visible, audible, touchable lives display the worth and beauty of God.”

Reading the Bible Supernaturally is a long book and at times repetitive. I recommend reading it slowly and not worrying about getting through the whole thing right away. View the book as a resource to come back to time and again. I believe the Lord will produce abundant fruit for every sincere reader of this wise and spiritually mature book. May we read God’s Word as He intended us to read it.

It is available for free at:

<https://document.desiringgod.org/reading-the-bible-supernaturally-en.pdf?ts=1523390859>

The author also delivers a lecture on the main thesis of the book at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lvGW5tw-wA>