

COMMISSIONED

THE ART OF LIVING OUT THE WORDS, WAYS, & MISSION OF JESUS

2.1 Reading Scripture **Reading and Studying**

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Hey, I'm Pastor Heather. Grateful to be on this Commissioned journey with you. The book we call the Bible is actually a collection of 66 books written by 40 different authors over the course of about 1400 years. It was written by fisherman, tax collectors, shepherds, kings, doctors, political prisoners and political advisers, farmers, and poets.

Genesis through Deuteronomy were probably written in the wilderness; Jeremiah wrote from a dungeon; Paul wrote his letters from prison; Luke wrote Acts while traveling through Asia Minor and Europe; John recorded Revelation while exiled on an island; different portions were written in Africa, Asia, and Europe.

There is history, poetry, teaching, letters, and urgent exhortations from prophets.

Amazingly, one seamless story emerges from these pages—the story of a God on a passionate pursuit to rescue the people that He loves. 66 books, one story.

A library of books dealing with loss and anger and transcendence and worry and empire and money and fear and stress and joy and doubt and grace and healing, the big questions of life.

And when we understand the plot of the story God is writing in this book, then it helps us not lose sight of the story God is writing in our lives. And it helps us hold onto faith in the end of the story.

The Bible stands in a unique place in literary history having been translated into two thousand languages and remaining the best selling book of all time. Its impact is unparalleled. Its teachings

have influenced the foundation of governments and the formation of laws. Enemies have endeavored to extinguish it and followers have given their lives for it.

The greatest proof of the supernatural power of the Scriptures is the testimony of the millions of lives that were radically changed as they encountered Jesus through it.

Regardless of what we think about religion or even Christianity ... When we consider the Bible's impact on societies, cultures, governments, and individuals... we are compelled to pay attention... we owe it to ourselves to find out for ourselves what's in the pages of Scripture.

Here are some ways we want to help people engage the text of Scripture.

- Reading Scripture- to give us a sense of scope and story. Reading as narrative helps us to see the big picture, connect the dots, internalize the major story arc that God is writing.
- Meditating on Scripture- to allow Scripture to read us, to ignite our imaginations, to engage our wills and to shape our hearts. It's about allowing the word of God to examine us, dissect us, and transform us.
- Studying Scripture- to help us understand the words of Jesus within the world of Jesus by looking through geographical, historical, cultural, and spiritual lenses that shape our understanding of what these words meant by the original authors and audiences. Studying Scripture allows us to better understand the words of the Bible by stepping more accurately into the world of the Bible.
- Memorizing Scripture- to internalize the Scripture so the Holy Spirit can call in to mind at appropriate times so that we can draw from its wisdom and guidance. It's about allowing the word to be imprinted on our minds and hearts.

Here are some practical ideas to help you as you dive into reading the Bible:

First, make a Plan. Set a time, place, and strategy for reading. Failing to plan is planning to fail. If you don't know where to start, follow the Bible reading plan on the NCC app. Or read through one of the Gospels. Or Paul's letter to the Philippians or the Ephesians.

Second, Pray. Prayer is critical to reading. The same Spirit that inspired the original writers of Scripture can illuminate it to the readers today. As you read, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you are reading.

Third, Look for God. We tend to read the Bible looking for ideas that resonate with us or actions we should take or attributes we should develop. While all of those are good, begin by looking

first and foremost for God. What is God like? What does God do? How does he do it? Take note of the names, attributes, titles, and adjectives used to describe him.

Fourth, Write it down. Write down what you are discovering, learning, and praying. Take note of what is confusing, frustrating, or disturbing. Mark up your Bible and record your thoughts in a journal. Begin by asking the question, “what does the text say?” And then “what does it mean?” and finally, “how does it apply to me today? We will dive deeper into that process in the lesson on Studying the Text.

Fifth, Read it together. The best way to read the Bible is within the context of community and conversation. The Bible wasn’t meant to be merely read... but to be wrestled with, to be discussed, to be dissected. And it is also meant to dissect you. Find a group of friends or small group and dig in together!

Finally, at the end of your daily time in Scripture, ask yourself two questions:

- What did the Holy Spirit reveal to me today? And...
- What am I going to do about it?

Because the last thing we want to do is to become educated beyond the level of our obedience. We must put the Scriptures to work in and through our lives. To make us more like Jesus.

Dive deeply into the Word of God. You might be surprised by what you find. And over time, you might be surprised by who you become.