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FIVE WAYS *to* READ *the* BIBLE

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INTRODUCTION

People of the Word

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these **words** that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” – Deuteronomy 6:4-9*

Anglican spirituality is Biblical spirituality. Over 80% of our Book of Common Prayer comes directly from the Scriptures. Indeed, every word of Anglican liturgy is saturated in Holy Scripture. Devotion to reading Scripture in the Daily Office and daily worshipful reading of the Psalms is a core part of who we are as followers of Jesus.

Jesus is the Word (John 1:1), the divine speech made flesh. And the Word himself was devoted to the Scriptures (John 15:10), so every disciple of Jesus must be devoted to reading the Scriptures, and this, not only for ourselves. We are called to feed the sheep in our care, over and over again.

The Word himself was devoted to reading the Scriptures.

Five Ways to Read the Bible: A Brief Summary

Reading and knowing the Bible is not as hard as we make it out to be. Below is a brief summary of a biblical, holy, and achievable (by normal people) approach to reading and knowing the Bible.

Liturgical Hearing (page 3)

The first and central way to engage with the Bible is by hearing the Word proclaimed every Sunday in the church.

Reflective Reading (Lectio Divina) (page 4)

Our disposition towards the Bible should be to listen with humility. Every day, prayerfully read a short passage of Scripture and wait in silence, whether for 1 minute or 15 minutes, in order to hear Christ speak.

Whole Book Reading (page 5)

The Bible is meant to be read as a whole, not divided up into parts and analyzed. Every week, schedule a time and read through a whole book at one sitting.

Bible Study (page 6)

In order to fully understand the Bible we must study. A few times a year (ex. in a small group), read and study a book of the Bible, consulting study notes, commentaries, and other books.

Artistic Reading (page 9)

The Bible is beautiful. Whether through icons, verses written on your bathroom mirror, or listening to the Bible set to music, we hide the Word in our hearts through the beauty of art.

FIVE WAYS TO READ THE BIBLE

Liturgical Hearing

Twenty-first century evangelical Christians (sometimes) put a lot of pressure on themselves to be Bible scholars. We assume that the only way to be a faithful reader of the Bible is to have a Strong's concordance in one hand, a study Bible in the other, and to wake up at 4:00 a.m. every day and study (for the test).

While this kind of diligent study might be good, the widespread assumption that this is the primary (or best) way that we should engage with the Bible is misguided. This high bar most often leads to discouraged Christians who don't read their Bible because of perceived inadequacy or shame.

Rather, the first and central way that we engage with the Bible is by *hearing* the Word proclaimed every Sunday in the church. Gathered worship should be about reading, proclaiming, and participating in the Word, and this weekly rhythm is vital to human flourishing.

Sunday worship is not just another event alongside soccer tournaments, football games, beach weekends, or vacations. 52 weeks a year, whether on vacation in Europe or lounging at the beach, we need to gather for Sunday worship.

So relax, Christian. Put down your study Bible for a minute and listen to God speak, in his Word, with the gathered church.

So relax, Christian.
Put down your study
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Reflective Reading

(see also *Praying the Bible* on page 10)

Lectio Divina is the practice of spending prayerful time with a short passage of Scripture in order to hear Christ speak to us and nourish the deepest parts of our life. The form described below represents the Ignatian tradition, which is embodied in the daily devotional, *Sacred Space: The Prayer Book*.

The Hospitality of Silence

Relax. Slow down. Be still. Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Light a candle. As you still your body, heart, and mind, remember that Jesus is “the light of the world” (John 8:12).

The Presence of God

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). The Lord of all creation desires to meet with me. What a remarkable privilege! Lord Jesus, I welcome you.

Freedom

Haste and hurry are deadly to the spiritual life. Dear Lord, give me the grace to be calm, not agitated; to have complete confidence in your loving care.

Consciousness

“In God’s loving presence, I can afford to be honest about who I am. What are my fears and desires? What do I expect from God? What am I willing to give to God—from my emotions and talents, thoughts and energy? And how do I feel now? I share my feelings openly with the Lord” (*Sacred Space*).

The Word of God

Read a short passage of Scripture. What word, phrase, or scene catches your attention? Linger over it. You might perceive a new depth to the Scripture, an expanded meaning, or suddenly see a particular insight.

Conversation

“Remembering that I am still in God’s presence, I imagine Jesus himself standing or sitting beside me, and I say whatever is on my mind, whatever is in my heart, speaking as one friend to another” (*Sacred Space*).

Conclusion

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Whole Book Reading

We read whole books of the Bible at one sitting in order to get a firm grasp on the whole sweep of the Biblical story. With exceptions for the Psalms and Proverbs, the Bible wasn't primarily written to be read in short bursts of a few verses or several paragraphs. The Bible was meant to be heard straight through so that we are swept along in the full flow of the books. *Estimated reading times for each book are given in hours (h) and minutes (m). With 52 weeks in a year, this 40 week schedule gives you grace to miss... so relax, and read!*

WEEK 1: Genesis 3h	WEEK 24: Hosea 25m; Joel 10m
WEEK 2: Exodus 2.5h	Amos 21m; Obadiah 3m
WEEK 3: Leviticus 1.75h	WEEK 25: Jonah 7m; Micah 17m
WEEK 4: Numbers 2.5h	Nahum 7m; Habakkuk 8m
WEEK 5: Deuteronomy 2h	WEEK 26: Zephaniah 9m; Haggai 6m
WEEK 6: Joshua 1.5h	Zechariah 33m; Malachi 9m
WEEK 7: Judges 1.5h	WEEK 27: Matthew 2h
WEEK 8: Ruth 13m	WEEK 28: Mark 1.25h
WEEK 9: I Samuel 1.75h	WEEK 29: Luke 2h
WEEK 10: 2 Samuel 1.75h	WEEK 30: John 1.75h
WEEK 11: I Kings 1.5h	WEEK 31: Acts 2h
WEEK 12: 2 Kings 2.25h	WEEK 32: Romans 50m
WEEK 13: I Chronicles 2h	WEEK 33: I Corinthians 50m
WEEK 14: 2 Chronicles 2.5h	WEEK 34: 2 Corinthians 35m
WEEK 15: Ezra 35m	WEEK 35: Galatians 17m; Ephesians 17m
Nehemiah 50m	Philippians 12m; Colossians 11m
WEEK 16: Esther 25m	WEEK 36: I Thessalonians 10m
WEEK 17: Job 1.5h	2 Thessalonians 6m
WEEK 18: Ecclesiastes 25m	I Timothy 14m; 2 Timothy 10m
Song of Solomon 17m	WEEK 37: Titus 6m; Philemon 3m
WEEK 19: Isaiah 3.25h	Hebrews 38m
WEEK 20: Jeremiah 3.5h	WEEK 38: James 14m; I Peter 14m
WEEK 21: Lamentations 17m	2 Peter 9m
WEEK 22: Ezekiel 3.25h	WEEK 39: I John 14m; 2 John 2m
WEEK 23: Daniel 1h	3 John 2m; Jude 4m
	WEEK 40: Revelation 1h

Bible Study

More than mere **knowing**, the goal of study is **loving** God & neighbor.

“So anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up [the] double love of God and neighbor, has not yet succeeded in understanding them.” – St. Augustine

When we approach the Bible, our disposition matters. Are you coming to the Bible as the judge, standing over the text as the one who knows best? Or, are you coming to the Bible in humility, bowing down below the text, ready to hear and believe? Bible study necessarily involves analysis. Analysis with humility, not as a proud know-it-all.

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Three Ways of Bible “Study”

I. Devotionally (*under the text*): The Bible is the divine Word spoken for us and is meant to be read devotionally; to build up our love for God, to hear Him speak.

II. Exegetically (*in the text*): The Bible is beautifully crafted language, and careful attention to words, paragraphs, and context matter.

III. Historically (*behind the text*): The Bible was written to certain people at certain times, thus proper interpretation requires understanding of the time, place, and culture surrounding the text.

We need all three ways, in balance together, in order to study the Bible with wisdom.

What is the Goal of Bible “Study?”

“Jesus Christ and St Paul possess the order of charity, not of the mind, for they wished to humble, not to teach.” – Blaise Pascal

“By ‘teaching’ here Pascal means filling the mind with new ideas, and by ‘humbling’ he means emptying it of old ones...

*How can ‘humbling’ be better than ‘teaching?’ This makes no sense with regard to things below us (nature), only with regard to things above us (God) or things beside us (other people, God’s images). In regard to nature, the highest stage of knowledge is knowledge. But in regard to God and his images, **the highest stage of knowledge is love.** We know God and man only by loving them...*

Although knowledge is the best relation to nature, love and humility are the best relation to God.

When we know God, we drag him down to our anthropomorphic level, we make God more humanoid than he really is; but when we love God, we are raised up more closely to his level, we become more God-like than we were (for ‘God is love’).

Humility (‘humbling’) goes with love. Therefore, although knowledge (‘teaching’) is the best relation to nature, love and humility (‘humbling’) are the best relation to God.

And man. Who knows you best: the intellectual who does not love you or your dear friend who is not too bright but loves you deeply? No contest.”
– Peter Kreeft , *Christianity for Modern Pagans* (pgs. 32-34)

Studying the Bible should be a relational exercise. Ask God the Holy Spirit to give you heart-understanding. Remember, the goal of Bible study is always greater humility and love for God and others.

A Method for Bible Study

Tim Keller said that Scripture is either “basically about you” or about God. “Every single thing is not about what you must do in order to make yourself right with God, but what he has done to make you absolutely right with God.”

I. Read the text.

While you are reading, answer this question: what is the main idea?

How do you discern a main idea? There’s usually more than one!

Underline repeated words, phrases, or ideas. Pay attention to who is speaking, who is moving the story along (who is doing stuff... look at the verbs), and notice things that seem out of place. Who is the hero? Villain?

II. Read the text again. (*And again.*)

Did you notice anything new? Did the same idea stand out or a new idea?

III. Now, answer this question: **what is the fallen condition?**

“Asking about the Fallen Condition is simply asking what aspect of the fallen condition of mankind this passage addresses. By ‘fallen condition’ we mean ‘any aspect of human nature that requires God’s grace.’ (pg. 170) Then we ask how God/Jesus is presented in this text ‘as the remedy for our experience of sin, immaturity, suffering, and brokenness’ (pg. 171) in this world. That is, what Redemptive Solution is offered.” – Dan Doriani, *Getting the Message*

IV. Then answer: **what is the redemptive solution?**

How does God come to the rescue? What happens when/if God doesn’t come to the rescue (passive judgment, consequences)?

Remember, the meaning of the text is wrapped up in your love for God and love for your neighbor. Resist the temptation to read yourself as the hero, to identify with the good guys. Read with humility underneath Holy Scripture; put yourself in the place of the villain.

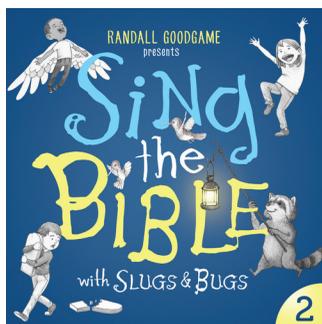
V. If you want, **read notes from a Study Bible or a commentary.** Compare and contrast your reflection with the study notes/commentary. Talk to your pastor, discuss in a small group, or talk with a wise teacher in the church.

Artistic Reading

The Bible is beautiful. Our Creator God made humanity, his image-bearers, to reflect his creative purposes in the world for his glory. Indeed, the whole enterprise of “art”: music, painting, among many other creative disciplines either began or uniquely flourished within Christendom (See Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity*).

We seek to honor the Word made flesh in the beauty of music, liturgical worship, our church building, diverse creative disciplines, and through the lives of saints who honor God through art.

Whether through “written” icons, verses written on your bathroom mirror, sketches, paintings, building, creating new songs, or simply listening to the Bible set to music, we hide the Word in our hearts through the beauty of art.



Sing the Bible, music at SLUGSANDBUGS.COM

Engage with Christian artists at *The Rabbit Room*: RABBITROOM.COM

Cultivate a Christian imagination at *Story Warren*: STORYWARREN.COM



“Revelation 12” by John Hughes



“Icon of the Good Shepherd”
by Amanda Rice

PRAYING THE BIBLE

A Method for Prayer

Read

Read aloud the Daily Office evening Psalm(s). Let the words of the Psalm guide your prayers throughout: guide your **adoration** of God, deepen your **confession** of sin, enrich your **thanksgiving**, and enliven your **supplication**, for your prayer requests as well as others.

A.C.T.S. Prayer

Read a Psalm. Then use the words of the Psalm to guide *adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication* to God.

Adoration

Begin your prayer in worship and adoration of God. Repeat lines of adoration from the evening Psalm(s). Praise the Triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit, that his everlasting fellowship is reflected on earth as it is in heaven.

“When the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever,” the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud” – 2 Chronicles 5:13

Confession

Pray silently or aloud, confessing yours sins against God and one another, especially those in your life group. Take note of areas where you are continually confessing the same sins and seek another to be accountable too.

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” – James 5:16

Thanksgiving

Thank your Father in heaven for the beautiful, unfathomable plan of the gospel, for the faithfulness of Jesus, and for the Spirit's secure and comforting presence. Thank God for the joy set before you in Christ and his coming kingdom. Then, thank God for restoring fellowship with one another in the gospel. Thank him for specific persons (by name) in your life group, for the way(s) they are a gift to you and the church.

“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” – 1 John 1:5-7

Supplication

Ask God to continue to knit your hearts together in love. Lift up the requests of others within your life group. Again, let the Psalm(s) guide and inform how you pray.

“And [Jesus] said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.” And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” – Mark 14:34-36

Anglican Rosary

The Anglican rosary is a method to guide our prayer, utilizing a physical, tactile object in order to structure our prayer, aid in memorization, and help focus our hearts and minds on God. Both historic prayers and straight from the biblical text prayers are rooted in the Bible.

Instructions

The Anglican rosary has a stem with a cross, an invitational bead, followed by a circlet of four cruciform beads separating sets of seven beads (weeks beads).

To use an Anglican rosary, hold it in your dominant hand, and beginning with the cross, say the first prayer. Move to the invitational bead and its prayer. Then continue through the circlet of beads, reciting one prayer per bead. Begin with a cruciform prayer. The four cruciform prayers (before each week) can be the same or different. The weeks beads may follow one of these patterns: one prayer for each weeks bead (one prayer, 28x), four prayers for each of the four weeks (4 prayers, 7x each), or a different prayer for each weeks bead (28 prayers, 1x each).

You may say the prayers for the circlet once, twice, or three times around (traditional threefold Trinitarian pattern) before concluding with a closing cruciform prayer, the invitational prayer, and the cross prayer.

Daily Prayer

Cross The Lord's Prayer

Invitatory Loving God, You created the world and me within it.
Jesus Christ, You saved me from my sins and redeemed me.
Holy Spirit, You fill me with your love and guide me.

Cruciform I dedicate my prayers and my life to you this day.
Week 1 I praise You and bless You, O Lord (7x)

Cruciform I dedicate my prayers and my life to you this day.
Week 2 O Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner. (7x)

Cruciform I dedicate my prayers and my life to you this day.
Week 3 Lord, I pray for all who are sick or in need. (7x)

Cruciform I dedicate my prayers and my life to you this day.
Week 4 I pray for your church and the world. (7x)

You may repeat the cirplet a second (and third) time.

Cruciform I dedicate my prayers and my life to you this day.

Invitatory Loving God, You created the world and me within it
Jesus Christ, You saved me from my sins and redeemed me.
Holy Spirit, You fill me with your love and guide me.

Cross The Lord's Prayer

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