



## **READING THE BIBLE**

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## INTRODUCTION

Through all of human history God has spoken. With words he created everything. With words he showed us that we need him. With words he declared victory in Jesus. With words he promised his coming Kingdom. He has blessed us richly with his Word, spoken and illuminated by the Spirit for the good of his people and the glory of his name. Our aim in this document is to provide you with a couple of different methods for reading and engaging with Scripture with the hope that you will be rooted in the Word of God. Below you will find two recommended methods for studying the Word and applying it in your life. We hope they will be useful to you as you press into the Lord and live out your faith in Jesus. We hope that as you read Scripture you are shaped by it and that the Lord does a mighty work in you.

## THE REAP METHOD

The REAP method is a straightforward way of approaching a biblical text and moving from basic understanding to application in a smooth manner. There are four steps with the REAP method - Read, Examine, Apply, and Pray (all detailed below). When you use this method, take time with each step, but don't spend all of your time on any specific area.

### READ

When studying the Bible, the first step is to simply read the passage you're studying. Read it plainly one time through just to get a sense of what you're reading. Then read it again more closely, taking it verse by verse or thought by thought. Make note of the flow of argument, significant words or figures, and important thoughts. It may be helpful to underline or circle certain words or phrases that stand out to you, or are repeated. If you have any questions about what's going on, write them down so you can come back to them in the next section. Once you've worked through the text in a more detailed way, then read it again to make sure you have a good understanding of what the text is communicating.

### EXAMINE

After reading the text several times, it's time to dive deeper. This is where study notes, footnotes, and cross references will be helpful. You may also want to consult trusted resources like commentaries or theological dictionaries if you need clarity on what certain things mean. Ask questions and try your best to answer them. Sometimes the answers may not come immediately and that's okay; give yourself time to grow.

Look back at any notes or questions you made when reading this passage. What is significant about the words or themes? Consider asking several questions about the passage you're studying. What does this passage say about God? How does Jesus fulfill or inform this passage? What does this passage say about God's people? How have they sinned, suffered, obeyed, and/or worshiped? What does this passage mean in context (in the

chapter, in the book, and in the whole Bible)? What did this passage mean for the original audience? What does this passage mean in light of the cross and resurrection of Christ?

### **APPLY**

After reading and examining the passage in question, consider how the Lord is leading you to respond. Do you need to confess and repent of sin? Do you need to reach out for help in some way? Are there conversations you need to have with friends or family? What do you need to stop doing? What do you need to start doing? Consider thinking in the short term - what needs to happen today or this week? Also consider longer-term patterns or rhythms - where are you headed in the next year or decade?

Consider what the Father intends to communicate with this passage. Consider what the death and resurrection of Jesus means in light of this passage. Consider what the Spirit is leading toward in light of this passage.

Write down several next steps - both in the immediate future, and in the longer term. Who can help you with these things? How has God already helped you, and how has he shown himself faithful?

### **PRAY**

After reading, examining, and applying God's Word in your life, spend time in prayer.

First, praise God because he is worthy to be praised. He is holy, he is righteous, he is mighty, and he is the King of kings. Worship him in prayer, and rejoice in him. We do this regardless of whether or not we feel like it; we do this because he is worthy.

Next, thank God for his Word and for the time to study it. Thank him for saving you, for the work of Christ on your behalf, and for the acceptance you have in light of Jesus' sacrifice. Thank him for sending the Spirit to you, and for leading you to a deeper understanding of his Word.

Then confess any sins you have committed, or any needs that you have. Tell him how you are hurting, what brings you joy, what grieves you, and what you're confused about. He is the God who sees, hears, knows, and acts. Pray to him because he listens and answers.

Finally, pray for wisdom, peace, confidence, and guidance as you pursue the steps you wrote down in the Apply section. Ask him for things, and pray specifically. He delights in you and he loves to hear your prayers. He is our Father, and he provides us with good things, so pray to him. Pray for your friends, your family, for our church leaders, for coworkers, for those in authority over you, and for whoever comes to mind.

It may be helpful to keep track of what you're praying for and when you pray for those things. Consider writing out your prayers in order to keep focused, and to look back over to see how the Lord answered them.

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

We hope that this REAP (Read, Examine, Apply, Pray) method will help you study Scripture more effectively, and will bring you a clearer understanding of what the Lord has revealed. We also hope that you will draw closer to the Lord and to his people as a result. Let's press into Scripture and see what he has in store for us. No matter what storms may come, and no matter what challenges we face, we have a God who speaks and a Word to read.

## LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is Latin and translates to “Divine Reading.” Lectio Divina will provide our CGs and our church family with a new but old way to listen and read scripture. “New” because this practice has been lost in the modern western context, and “old” because this practice dates back to the early centuries of the Christian Church and was established as a monastic practice by Benedict in the 6th century.

### STRATEGY (WHAT?)

Lectio Divina is a way of praying the scriptures that leads us deeper into God’s word. If we truly believe that God speaks to us, then we must view scripture as the primary avenue in which he does so. With Lectio Divina, we slow down, reading a short passage more than once. We chew it over slowly and carefully, savoring it. Scripture begins to speak to us in a new way. It speaks to us personally and aids that union we have with God through Christ, who is himself the Living Word. It incorporates listening to a short passage, prioritizing an experience of scripture rather than analyzing it, in order to open oneself to receive God’s word passively, but expectantly. It is best explained by Christopher Jamison, former Abbot of Worth Abbey in Sussex, England, in his book *Finding Sanctuary*. He writes of three key features of Lectio Divina:

- The first is that “the text is seen as a gift to be received, not a problem to be dissected...let the text come to you.”
- The second is that the lectio tradition “teaches us that in order to receive what the text has to offer, we must read slowly.”
- The third is that lectio is “a way of prayer.” He continues:

“Before reading, pray that God will speak to you through the text. During reading, allow the reading to evolve into meditation and then into prayer, and finally contemplation. When the reading is concluded, keep a phrase in mind and recall it throughout the day so that prayerful reading becomes prayerful living.”

### TACTICAL (HOW?)

As Lectio Divina isn’t a widely known practice, we will be providing passages that either coincide with the sermon series, *Knowing God’s Voice*, or that go hand in hand with PRDX 365. Our CG will be incorporating this as part of their gathering throughout the weeks of the sermon series before engaging in sermon questions.

### PROCESS

A good process to consider when practicing Lectio Divina is to consider the following:

- Read the passage four times, paying attention to different aspects of the passage as it is read.
- First and Second Reading (Esv)
  - Read the passage aloud twice, attentively listening for words or phrases that stick out. The purpose of this reading is to hear the text and listen for a word, phrase, or idea that captures your attention.

- Third Reading (Msg or CSV)
  - Focus your attention on that word, phrase, or idea, repeating it to yourself silently as the passage is read aloud a third time. After the third reading and a time of silent reflection, share what you have gleaned from the passage with the group.
- Fourth Reading (ESV)
  - Listen during the fourth reading to what God is inviting you to do or become. After the reading and a time of silent reflection, share your thoughts/experience with the group.