

Steps for Reflective Bible Reading

Before you begin, ask God to speak to you through his Living Word. Then read your passage, marking any verses which catch your attention. Then-

1. *Key Verse-* Prayerfully choose one verse (out of the ones you marked) to focus on, today. Write it down.
2. *Key Thought-* Put the main thought of this verse in your own words.
3. *So What?* Ask yourself questions that help you to reflect on your key verse, like “Why did this verse catch my attention?” “Do I do this?” “Why is this hard for me?” etc. This will be the longest section of your journal.
4. *Now What?* As a result of your reflection in the “So What?” section, write down one concrete thing that you’ll do in the next 24 hours to put this verse into practice.
5. Thank the Lord for this time and commit the rest of your day to him.

Example #1, from my freshman year of college ☺

Key Verse- “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” John 5:39-40

Key Thought- It isn’t enough just to know the words of God. They only have power and value in our lives when we allow them to lead us into a relationship with God. To read the Scriptures without practicing their teaching will prove fatal.

So What? Do I rely on the “puffing up” of knowledge, rather than allowing the “building up” of God’s love? Why? Is it a control issue? Because I think I can control how much I study, analyze, and memorize, I have often thrust myself into the intellectual pursuit of the Bible and failed to go to God (and apply His word to my life). So long as I am studying, I feel like a “good Christian,” that I am in control of our relationship. As soon as I begin to move towards God and apply it, I feel incredibly out of control. Yet isn’t that the way the Christian life should be lived? I think my problem is that I don’t really trust Him with my life. As long as I’m unconfident of His

omnipotence and love, I will feel nervous and out of control. I must not numb my spiritual “you need God” symptoms, but allow the illness to be cured by facing Him.

Now What? Today I will not do any kind of studying without a time of reflection- even for this class [I was a Bible major in college, and this example is from an assignment in a New Testament survey class]. After all, it is Scripture, no matter the method or context in which it is studied.

Example #2, while a mother of two young children

Key Verse- “There are many who say, ‘Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of Your face upon us, O Lord!’” Psalm 4:6

Key Thought- People are discouraged and desperate both to see some of life’s goodness and also to have a sense that God is looking upon them with grace.

So What? Why did this get my attention? I think I was captured by this phrase, “Lift up the light of Your face upon us.” The picture I have is of a crying baby/ child who is begging to be attended to/ picked up. So long as the mom is busy with other things, his heart remains heavy. But when she raises her gaze and her smile reaches his eyes, he knows he’s cared for and chances are very good that she will soon reach out to pick him up. I think there are other places in Scripture that employ this image of “smiling upon us” to indicate God’s loving attention and favor. I also notice that it appears to be those who do not yet trust God who are asking to see/ be embraced by God. And in response, David reflects on the joy that he has experienced with the Lord. He says, “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.” In other words, David’s joy is deeper and more full than just circumstantial. I’m reminded, here, of Psalm 45, and the picture of the girl-to-become-princess leading her peers to the palace of the king/ her beloved bridegroom. Our world is crying out for hope, beauty, truth, and goodness. God is so worthy of worship! It can be our great joy to first pleasure in his embrace (pull the weeds/ distractions/ lesser things so that our roots can grow down deep into the river of his living water), and then to bear witness to his goodness and invite others to experience it for themselves.

Now What- May I live in Your joy by delighting in my children, today! Insofar as it is up to me, I’ll play a game with them, this afternoon, and also at least get started on a new blog post.