

Equipped to enjoy reading the Bible (part two)

Someone has said, *“The Bible is not for reading - it’s for living.”* However, we can’t live out biblical truths if we don’t know what they are, so regular reading of what God has written is important for our spiritual development. The purpose of reading the Bible is to have our lives transformed by acting on what it says; it shouldn’t be to tick off yet another item on our “to do” list or just to fill our heads with information. We don’t want to become like the Dead Sea, where water flows in, but nothing flows out. Knowledge of God and His word needs an outlet into practical, everyday living. Here are some suggestions to help you get the most out of reading your Bible so you’ll be better equipped to live out what you’ve learned.

Idea #1: Highlighting and underlining. Have you ever taken a highlighter pen to a Bible passage? Are you in the habit of underlining words and phrases in your Bible? Do you write notes in the margin? These are quite useful ways of drawing your attention back to something that particularly impressed you when you read it. If you don’t like the idea of marking your Bible, you can always type out the passage, preferably in fairly large font. This will make it easier to add highlights or comments.

Begin by deciding which part of the Bible you’re going to study - a few verses would probably be enough to start with. Once you have the passage you want to study, take different coloured pens and begin marking your paper. Perhaps you’ll underline key phrases in one colour; circle comparisons and contrasts in another; highlight commands; draw arrows between related ideas; or jot down in the margin any questions that spring to your mind. This is a great technique for creative doodlers!

Idea #2: Note-taking. Did you know that some psychological research into memory indicates that 90% of material you’ve been attending to is forgotten after 30 minutes? Startling or what? One way to remember what you read in the Bible is to make notes as you go along. Some people use a notebook specifically for this purpose; others type their thoughts directly onto the computer screen. Either way, this gives you a permanent record of what you’ve learned from your Bible reading. After you’ve read a Bible passage, you might want to consider the following questions:

- What did I learn about God?
- What did I learn about myself?
- What encouraged me?
- What convicted me?
- What do I need to do?

This technique is one of my favourites, because it helps me turn principles into practice in a simple, straightforward way, and it really works!

Idea #3: Memorisation. Imagine the situation... You’re faced with a particular problem and you have a vague notion that there are some Bible verses that address this, but you’re not sure exactly what these verses say or where you can find them. Does this sound familiar? Now imagine being in a situation where you could instantly bring God’s word to mind and use it to help you resist a temptation, exercise self-control, or make a wise decision. Well, this can become a reality if you’re prepared to spend some time memorising Bible verses. Why not make a decision today to learn one or more verses every month? You might want to get some of your friends on board, too, to give you that extra motivation to keep going!