



Reading the Bible Toward An Encounter With Christ

FULLNESS

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"For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Hebrew 4:12

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

If we are honest, we would all have to admit that at times we have all struggled with our daily Bible reading. We have good intentions, but we struggle to translate our intentions into action. Well, good news! Once you begin encountering the manifest presence of Christ in your daily Bible reading, you will never again need to force yourself to read the Bible. You won't be able to stop reading! Guaranteed.

The Bible exists for one ultimate purpose—that you may know and experience the God of the Bible. The apostle John wrote in his Gospel, *"but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name"* (John 20:31). John says that the Bible, and certainly his Gospel in particular, was written that we may believe in Christ and have life in Christ. This means that when you read the Bible, you are to encounter the God of the Bible, not just the words of the Bible.

5 Elements of an Encounter With Christ

1. High Worship
2. Deep Repentance
3. Forgiveness and Freedom
4. Being Filled With the Holy Spirit
5. Being Empowered for Ministry

Since these are the five elements of an encounter with Christ, and since our Bible reading is intended to lead us to an encounter with Christ, we should expect our Bible reading to lead us into these aspects of an encounter with Christ.

It may be surprising but the Bible is not a religious book; it is a love letter written by the God of the universe to you. Though it was written many years ago, it is a miracle book that is as relevant as the evening news

and as personal as a text message from your best friend. Yes, it's big, but don't let the size overwhelm you. For all that the Bible contains, it is remarkably brief, strategic and potent.

One book
made up of 66 books
written on 3 continents
by 40 contributing authors
over 1,600 years
in 3 languages
covering 4 civilizations
and 60 generations
by 1 Author.

Keep in mind that while the Bible is a great book – God's book – it is not an end in itself. The Bible is a means to an end – knowing and encountering Christ. When you read the Bible, you want to know Christ, not only in your mind, but to experience Him in your everyday life. The Bible contains countless examples of the Kingdom principle that when God speaks, things happen. God's Word sets things in motion.

It is interesting to note that ten percent of Jesus' words were quotes from the Old Testament (1,876 verses in the Gospels contain words of Christ; 180 of those verses were direct quotes from or references to the Old Testament.) Since Jesus loved the Bible and the Old Testament in particular, we, too, want to love it.

"Take time. Give God time to reveal Himself to you. Give yourself time to be silent and quiet before him, waiting to receive, through the Spirit, the assurance of his Presence with you, his working in you. Take time to read his Word as in his Presence, that from it you may know what He asks of you and what He promises you. Let the Word create around you ... within you a holy atmosphere, a holy heavenly light, in which your soul will be refreshed and strengthened for the work of daily life." – Andrew Murray [V. Raymond Edman, *They Found the Secret* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 101.]

5 Practical Tips to Encounter Christ in Your Daily Bible Reading

If you want to do more than simply read the Bible, and you want to encounter the God of the Bible, here are five practical tips for you to use to help you maximize your daily Bible reading.

1. Read interactively.

Because God wants a love-relationship with you and because the Bible is His love letter to you, He wants you to read it interactively. It is helpful to read with three different color pens.

Red to mark the promises of God, what God promises to do for you.

Black to mark the commands of God, what He wants you to do for Him.

Blue to mark general information worth remembering.

Also it is helpful to mark an "MP" in the margin every time you spot the manifest presence of God.

"Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

2. Read prayerfully.

Whether outwardly or internally, it is beneficial to read the Bible on your knees. Ask God for help. Ask the Holy Spirit to supernaturally reveal Christ in His Word. Many promises of God are already underlined in red. You will want to mark more promises in red that you discover. Each of these promises are worth bringing back to God in prayer and reminding Him of what He has promised. As King David did, it is helpful to

earnestly ask God to open the eyes of your spirit as you read the Bible so that you can recognize Christ and encounter Him on every page.

“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of your law.” Psalm 119:18

3. Read obediently.

Far more than a warehouse of information, the Bible is more like a workout room, full of exercise equipment with which we get in shape for life. Look for things to do when you read the Bible. Many commands are already underlined in black, but these are only the beginning. You will want to underline many more commands God gives you as you read.

“Everyone therefore who hears these words of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house on a rock.” Matthew 7:24

4. Read affectionately.

The Bible is God’s love letter written to His children. He wants you to discover what He promises to do for you because He loves you. He wants you to discover what He commands you do for Him because you love Him. This is a winning combination – believing His promises and obeying His commands. This is how the Bible helps you encounter the love of God and the manifest presence of Christ.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment.” Matthew 22:37-38

*“The holy
Scriptures
are our letters
from home.”
St. Augustine*

5. Read voraciously.

Healthy people are hungry people. They eat a lot. Voracious is *wanting or devouring great quantities of food*. Read the Bible with an appetite. It is good to have an insatiable, gluttonous and voracious appetite when it comes to the Word of God. Don’t just read, but feed! Feeding on God’s Word is the key to spiritual health. Spiritual hunger and spiritual health go hand-in-hand.

“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4

**For the full article, purchase a copy of Fred Hartley’s annotated Bible,
God’s Word on Fire, available on Amazon.**

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