

Psalm 119

How to get some good from the Good Book

how many of you have a Bible that you read whenever want?
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B is most remarkable bk ever written.
tho 1000s of yrs old, remains best selling bk by far.

--if bk sells couple 100,000 copies - "best seller."
at least 20 million Bs are sold each yr (in addition to 10 of millions distributed free)

people spend so much money on it bec thru the centuries, persons witnessed God spkg to them. "God-breathed"

is chapt in B - every v is about a reason for treasuring B .
how long think that chapt is ?!

is longest chapt in B .
anyone know which chapt ?
(**Psalm 119**)

turn there. (mid of B . Ps 118 - mid)

several of you, read v that strikes you.
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for all of you who said have a B :
if someone hid that B last wk , would you have noticed?!

the other yr , read an article called the B : "America's Favorite Unopened Text".
tho is so valuable, precious, also can be intimidating / hard to read.

when we do pick it up and read it,
how can we get all the good we can from Good Book.

Two ways to get some good from the Good Book

for those of us who want to get all good we can from Good Book, let me describe for you 2 ways to do that.

1. Devotional Bible Reading

something I do nearly every morn .

open B & read w **goal: let God speak to my life**

I have bookmark somewhere in Ps , somewhere in rest of OT, in NT .

read w this g in mind: what is passage-I'm-rdg saying to me-&-my-situation?
focus on letting God spk to your life thru pages .

perhaps most impor thing when rdg may be knowing when to stop.

Evelyn Christenson describes 3-point formula worked for her for over 40 years:

- 1) read until God speaks,
--maybe I'll read a warning for me
promise I can claim
example I should follow today
sin I must avoid or confess
some encouragement I can take to heart
words of praise I can echo

- 2) stop reading,
- 3) interact with God the author in prayer. about doing it / living it.

when keep reading after God has tried get our attention, miss thrill of God of universe communicating w us directly. & personally interacting w him.

-- B is only book on earth where its author is willing and able to interact with us every time we read his book!

much of the time nothing really dramatic hits me.
but just the bare fact of opening myself to God as I open the B adjusts my heart / changes my attitude, way approach day.

let me give some Tips that will "up the odds" something dramatic happen:

the first of **Practical tips:**

- don't bog down in difficult sections (only neg tip)
don't sit-&-get-frustrated / sit-&-spin-wheels.

B seems like gigantic collection of inspirational messages, mixed in w bunch of incomprehensible, problematic passages.

there are diffic sections:

times when can't figure out what saying
times when can't figure out why saying it. appalled.

what do we do w those sections?

I have confidence that all the B's instructions lead humanity in the way of health and wholeness--as fast and wisely as possible.
--if we saw actual, historical sit prophet/ apos addressing, & knew what God trying to do, would applaud.
but when we don't, do only thing can do: just * go on.

eg. when eating & find something on plate can't eat, do you stop eating altogether? or put that aside, & go on eating what can eat?

when rdg B & find section can't understand, move on.
you'll soon find something that does feed you.

Mark Twain: Most people are bothered by those parts of the Bible they cannot understand, but as for me, --it's not those parts that trouble me. -- it's the parts that I do understand.

- start with the Gospels, Epistles

- use a new translation

eg NLT

- sometimes read the Scripture aloud

--hear it with your ears as well as with your mind.

- read with a pencil or pen

having to jot things down helps you notice more; helps avoid mental laziness. also forces to clarify hazy insights.

strongly enc you adopt this way of rdg B .

but. there is a danger here.

is danger that --as we are rdg B verses to see what "hits" us--, we'll be hit w stuff from own mind/heart. --when ask "what God saying to me in this passage?", might hear our voice rather than God's.

often as we listen to something, trigger all kinds of memories/ associations.
(reveal more about what's in our mind than about what was in author's mind!)

ever had someone hear your exact words - get a totally diff mng from them than you intended?
call that "reading into".

Danger: "read into" the Bible what we want it to say

eg 9-yr old Mets fan thot the first words of Gen were "In the big inning..."

we read into the B what we expect to see there.

how we guard against that?
so not "read into" B what we want it to say?

so pray

open yourself to God to spk / teach. loves you; wants you to hear him even more than you want to hear him.

and keep your heart obedient, willing to be confronted by God

(rather than read B to confirm what already think/want to do.)
it is as we want to hear what God says (--even if it confronts what we want to think/do) that we hear Sp .

and practice a second way of Bible reading!

do devotional way of reading the B every day. (but don't condemn self if miss a day. --it's not law, but opportunity! [Ps 119])
but occasionally do this 2nd way:

2. Indepth Bible Study

I do this every wk or so.

should do it whenever particularly impor to be hearing God's voice rather than yours.

eg. if you are teaching.
if are basing major life decision on Sc .

in Dev B Rdg , read until something "hits" you...& not worry about rest.
in Indepth B St , **goal: work to understand whole passage**

ask qs such as these when you read:

- what are the points the writer makes?

(who, what, when, where)

- how can I put them in my own words?

not really understand until do more than parrot .
attempt to find basic truths/ doctrine arise from passage.

Dev B Rdg - like going for a walk outside. woods stream . goal is to receive something-- anticipate you'll see/hear some things that will delight . but even if nothing new, just soaking in atmosphere rejuvenate .

Indepth B St - again go for walk in nature. this time take binoculars or microscope, Peterson's guidebks . goal is to study/understand what observe. more intensive, delib . cover smaller area.

Ind B St is work. takes time. reading & re-reading as we seek to understand how the author used each word/sentence/para .
reason why willing to do this work: we want to "read out of" the B the author's ideas. don't want to "read out of" it our ideas.

--reading God's ideas out of text - lot more profitable than reading our ideas into text.

give you some practical tips for figuring out what in author's mind when wrote:

Practical tips:

- Pay attention to context (what comes before & after).

eg. suppose received email/letter, and not sure what one sentence mnt .
would read on to see if shed light. & read more carefully what said before.

eg. one of Ps : "Be still, and know that I am God"
what mn ? I want obey. --how do that?
if were doing Dev Rdg , might have idea pop in my mind: Psalmist suggesting I sit in corner w hands folded. time of meditation away from rush of world.

eg. Psalm 46:10. as look at context, get light.

⁸ *Come and see the works of the LORD,...* ⁹ *He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire.* ¹⁰ *"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."* ¹¹ *The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

now it's clear author not have in mind finding spot nothing going on so can pray / med .
is thinking of all the chaos & tumult of life. & saying: in that, be still / stop worrying.
God is calling us to stop and acknowledge all that he is doing -- he is doing so much more than we realize.
"be still" - stop trying so hard to make everything work.

look at what is written before and after the text

don't read as collection of isolated vvs. even chaps.

- Research the author's world

another thing you would do if can't figure out sentence in email/ letter: try to deduce from what-you-know-about-them, what might be referring to.
if still can't, show it to someone who knows them better than you. more know about someone, more chance understand letter by them.

eg. J told story about Pharisee & tax-collector.

eg. Luke 18:13 Pharisee prayed telling God what a good man was.
But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

doesn't "beating breast" mn "I - he-man." Tarzan?
why would man w head down, saying "God have mercy," beat breast?!

need to research J's world. in their culture showed anguish, remorse & repentance.

so more read passage, & more know about culture, more accurate can read B .

a good Study B will give you this. eg. NIV Study B .

another eg -- a command given over & over in NT :

eg. Romans 16:16, 1 Cor 16:20, 2 Cor 13:12, 1 Thes 5:26, 1 Peter 5:14

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

how many of you did that this morn ??

so are we disobeying Sc ?!

this was written in a sit different than ours, w diff cultural customs. when they wanted greet someone warmly, kiss. (seems foreign to us today.)

so what God saying in these vs : "when you greet , show warm affection."
today - hearty handshake hug

two other suggestions make quickly.

as grow in familiarity w Sc ,

- Compare parallel passages

if B touches on same theme on other occasions, read them. check out
what says there. see whether the parallel passages confirm your
interp , or suggest another mng .

- Compare conclusions with other persons

eg. a bible study group, commentary, Study B .

for encouragement (is hard work)
to catch considerations you missed.

you are not only one studying. only one w Sp .
need to compare conclusions.

again, need for balance.

just as there is a danger in Dev B Rdg , also danger in Indepth B St :
easy to allow the studying to stop at studying.
just get head-full of what Sc says. & let it remain sterile/intel / cold.

Danger: end up with merely a head full of facts

be sure to apply it to you. ask "what is God spkg to me in this passage?"

D.L.Moody:

The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives.

in Lship Spr '88 p66

when a guy gets an email or text msg from his girl, the message is not the end.
--he's not content to just analyze the words (diagram sentences, conjugate
verbs).

he reads it. --intently. but he doesn't stop there. he goes on to think about how
affects the rel . --"what should he do in response?"

so w the B . don't stop w mastering the details of the letter. use those details
(as you understand them) to further your relationship w God.

how can we guard against this danger (to not end up with merely a head full of
facts as we study the Bible)?

read it letting God speak to your life -- which is the focus of devotional B study!
so, incorporate devotional reading into your study

be asking as studying it: "what is God spkg to me in this passage?"
interact in prayer. "God, help me live it / let it affect my rel w you."

read the Good Bk . get lots of good from it.

read it w your heart --"what are you saying to me, God?"

but not just w heart: read it w your head --"what are author's main pts ? how
put them in own words?"

but not just w head: --read it w your heart. *

do both. ...& you'll get the most good can get from the Good Book.