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Why Christians Don't Read the Bible

Abstract

"How we imagine God will also determine another key aspect of the life of the Christian--how and how much we read our Bible."

Posting about ways to reinvigorate Bible reading from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/why-christians-dont-read-the-bible/>

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In All Things, Bible, God, Holy Spirit, meditation

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Why Christians Don't Read the Bible

 [all in allthings.org/why-christians-dont-read-the-bible/](https://allthings.org/why-christians-dont-read-the-bible/)

Aaron Baart

One of my favorite exercises to do with students is to ask them to close their eyes and imagine what they see when they picture God. I find this practice so telling because what we see in our mind's eye when we picture God says so much about what we think about him and whether or not we think him worth knowing. Of course, what we actually picture is dependent upon many factors: how God was spoken of growing up by the most influential voices in our lives; our own experiences of God throughout our hardest and most favorite times of life; and more often than not, God is also a type of reflection of how we see ourselves. In other words, what we imagine may actually say more about us than it does about him.

But how we imagine God will also determine another key aspect of the life of the Christian—how and how much we read our Bible. You see, if our picture of God is full of “oughts” and “shoulds” as we imagine a God who is never entirely happy with us—a distant being, difficult to please and even harder to know—then it is no wonder that as his followers we don't more readily race to his words as the source of all of our comfort, direction, and identity.

There are other reasons too why as Christians we don't read our Bibles more. Here are two more to consider:

We've forgotten how to read it. Or maybe we've never actually properly learned in the first place that the Bible was never meant to be read the same way we read everything else. After all, in most of our reading, we read for information. We do it quickly, glancing for nuggets of knowledge and take away sound-bites. We scan headlines and key words and quotes. We look for facts. But the Bible was never meant to be read for *information*; it is meant to be read for *transformation*. My friend, Syd Hielema said it best: “Usually when I read something, I take it in and it finds its place inside me. But when I read the Bible, it *takes me in* so that I find my place inside it.” And this single difference in how we approach the Biblical text is critical. It calls for a slow and searching read, one where the primary reader isn't even our own mind but the Spirit of God inside of us. It is a reading of partnership, a realization that the same Spirit of God who inspired these words so many years ago is the same Spirit of God now alive in me, interpreting them not merely on the paper in front of me, but from deep within my being as well.

I have also become more solidly convinced over time that a huge reason why we don't read our Bibles more isn't because we are afraid it isn't true but because we are terrified that it really is. After all, if I declare that the Bible is the word of God and the source of all truth, then what I encounter within it demands a response. It can't leave me the same. And so I've found in conversation with so many people in years of pastoral work that when someone tells me that they are struggling with reading the Bible, the real reason usually has more to do with their fear of what they'll find or be reminded of that they actually already know than a fear that what they'll read is irrelevant or powerless. And so we avoid the Bible, sometimes even subconsciously, not because we are scared it isn't true but because we are terrified that it just might be.

So, if you're looking for ways to reinvigorate your Bible reading—how and why we read it—perhaps these few quick tips will help:

- Read slower and read smaller sections, maybe even only a few verses at a time.
- Read it and let it read you. Remind yourself that you aren't the only one involved in the act. The

Holy Spirit is present and he wants to speak.

- Leave as much time in silence after you're done reading to listen to the Spirit. Just like no good sermon exists without an application, no good reading of the Bible does either. And the Spirit is a pretty decent preacher.