

Community Bible Reading

Jesus regularly taught and demonstrated to his disciples that we need to make time in our lives to intentionally engage with the Father. Before ascending into Heaven, the Resurrected Jesus famously said to his disciples, “go and make disciples”. While making disciples includes more than this, we believe that part of the life and rhythm of a disciple includes the discipline of daily communing with God in and through His Word.

This journal and bible reading plan isn’t anything magical. It is a tool, to aid us in engaging with God in his word as we grow as disciples of Jesus.

Community Bible Reading Goals

1. To discover the truths of Jesus in scripture
2. To fall more in love with Jesus our chief shepherd.
3. To grow in obedience to Jesus through his word.
4. To be equipped for the sake of mission through the Word and Spirit

Community Bible Reading Schedule

The CBR is designed in such a way that as you daily engage with God in His Word, every year you will read the New Testament, and every three years you will read the entirety of the Old Testament. Monday through Friday you will read one chapter from the Old Testament and one chapter from the New Testament. Saturdays you will read a Psalm, and Sundays there is no assigned reading. That may sound like a lot of reading especially if you are beginning to read the word for the very first time. The reading can take anywhere from 5 minutes to 20 min depending on the reader, but we recommend trying to block off thirty minutes to an hour for reading, journaling and prayer.

With that being said we’ve found that with reading plans we need lots of grace for one another. Sometimes we can fall behind in a reading plan and all the sudden it becomes a checklist motivated by guilt and shame, rather than primarily a place to engage with God in his word. So if you find yourself falling behind don’t beat yourself up over it, jump back in and pick up wherever the daily reading is that day.

Daily Journaling Guide

In light of the goals for Community Bible Reading, the CBR Journal is designed to guide you through Four Movements each morning.

1. SURRENDER through prayer

2. LISTEN to the scripture
3. PRAY - through your Pen
4. PREPARE for Gospel Community

SURRENDER through Prayer

We invite you each day to start your time with prayer. This of course is not the only way to approach scripture but we invite you to consider praying in these ways:

Prayers of Surrender

We want to make sure that we are coming under the scripture, not placing ourselves above it. We want to present ourselves to the Lord which is our spiritual act of worship. (Romans 12:1)

Prayers for Illumination

The Bible clearly teaches that the ability to rightly, increasingly and effectively understand the Scriptures comes as a gift from the Holy Spirit. Ask Holy Spirit to give you insight and understanding. To illuminate the text, your heart, and what he has for you that day.

Prayers for Transformation

When we see Jesus in the Word, we are transformed day by day to become more like him. Ask God to renew you as you read. Ask him to continue his ongoing work in your life.

Sample prayer: Father you are the source of life, and I come to you and trust that your word is authoritative, useful, and powerful. I present my whole self to you and ask you speak through your Word empowered by the Spirit. I want to listen to you, be changed by you, and fall more in love with you today.

LISTEN to the Scripture

Community Bible Reading is not a chore to check off the list, but an opportunity to commune with God. Be cognizant of the fact that God is speaking to you through his Word. While it's legitimate to ask the Spirit to give you understanding where you're confused, we recommend that you spend more time reflecting on and applying to your life those aspects of the reading that have been made clear to you.

PRAY through your pen

Sometimes it is really helpful to pray through your pen/journal. For most people you will find that your retention level and ability to engage with the scriptures is actually heightened as you journal, and it will become even more effective the

However, there are handfuls of roadblocks that come up as we try and engage with God through a reading plan like this:

When reading becomes a chore, you experience less Joy.

You know that reading has become a chore, when you're proud and puffed up from doing it, when you're down and ashamed from not doing it, when you "have to" do it and when you "have to" catch up on missed days.

The last thing we want is for you to feel like CBR is a chore. Turing this reading plan into a way to earn God's favor is a recipe for a draining relationship with God. If you are a follower of Jesus the Lord delights in you because of Jesus. We don't read his word to gain favor, we read his Word because he has already shown us favor and long to grow in relationship with him more.

There will be times however, when you don't *feel* like reading. This is where we encourage you like with exercise, or eating vegetables, to be disciplined and do what's best for your soul if even in the moment you may not *feel* like it. A slow and faithful devotion to God's word will reap a steady life of Joy rooted in Jesus.

When Reading becomes a study you experience less intimacy.

You know that reading has become a study when you spend more time on the verses that confuse you than the verses that are clear to you. Or, reading has become a study when you think of ways to teach the text to other people, instead of prayerfully responding to the Lord and what he's showing you personally. Often things are more impactful when caught not taught. With that in mind, our first motivation shouldn't be how can I teach this to someone else. But how does this affect my life, and what God is trying to do in me.

Don't get us wrong we absolutely want to study the word of God, but what we don't want to do is turn the word into a text book, more than an intimate conversation with Jesus. If you feel like there is no intimacy as you are reading scripture I would bet that one of two things are happening. First, you are racing through your time in the word and not leaving space for God to speak. Second, you have turned your bible reading primarily into a bible study, rather than a place for you to commune with the living God through his word.

When reading becomes exclusively private you experience less transformation.

We believe that the Scriptures are to be reflected upon personally and dialogue over in community (whether that's with one other person or in community group). Not to read is to presume that we are God and have no need to hear from him. To read, not reflect, but engage in community will make us co-dependent. To read, reflect, but not engage in community will make us independent fools. The goal is interdependent faithfulness where we hear from the Lord ourselves and then expect to benefit from engaging in community together.

You may ask yourself have I made my bible reading exclusively private? Remember God grows us in, and through gospel based relationships. When we share with one another

what God is doing in us, and teaching us through his word, we will see him do incredible things. God doesn't only want to work in us, he has created us and redeemed us to to work through us as well.

The 4 Questions

We understand that for many journaling is not a normal practice. However we do invite you to give it a try and make it a priority as you engage with God in his word. Prayer journaling is an opportunity to respond to God and what he has communicated to you through his word. Here are a few recommendations to structure your journaling.

First pray a prayer of surrender to prepare your heart to receive from God in his word and ask the Holy Spirit to speak. Then as you read we invite you to use the 4 questions to help shape the way you interpret scripture. You will notice that in each section there is a place for confession and repentance. Confession is agreeing with God about your sin and should be accompanied with repentance - turning from your sin and believing in the truth. Our sin is not primarily a behavior problem but a belief problem.

1. Who is God?
 - a. The Bible of course is primarily about God, and his plan of redemption. This question puts us in a place of regularly growing and recognizing God's character as it is revealed in scripture.
2. What has God done, specifically through Jesus?
 - a. Jesus is the Hero of the Bible. Whatever the problem may be, Jesus is the solution.
 - b. So much of our sin is found rooted in not fully believing in what Jesus has accomplished through his death and resurrection.
3. Who am I?
 - a. This is an identity question, and one we have to be reminded of daily. As a result of who God is, and what he's done through Jesus what is God trying to remind me of in his word about who I am.
 - b. This is also a place for confession, where we confess what I'm not believing about who I am. Most of our sin is rooted in lack of belief in who we are in Jesus.
4. How then should I live?
 - a. This question is most powerful and beneficial in our lives when it follows what we've learned about who God is, what he's done through Jesus, and what our identity is. When we understand those three things it fuels how we now get to live as sons and daughters of God.
 - b. This is also a place for confession as we may be confronted with how we have been living. Make sure to be honest with yourself and the Lord in this

space. 1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.” One of the greatest accelerants in our relationship with God is honest confession and repentance with him.

- c. Our sin is rooted in unbelief in some way or another. It is a great opportunity to confess what our behavior is and walk back where our error in belief is. Here is an example
 - i. How I’ve been living - I’ve been really selfish lately
 - ii. What I believe about who I am when I’m selfish- I’ve been believing that I am king of my own kingdom and if I don’t get to do what I want I get to throw a tantrum- I’m not happy, I’m not satisfied.
 - iii. What am I believing about what Jesus has done? I believe that what Jesus accomplished is cool but not good enough to satisfy my soul.
 - iv. What am I believing about God? That I actually have a better plan for my satisfaction and happiness than He does.
- d. Once we identify the wrong belief that is confession. Now we turn in repentance to right belief.
 - i. The truth is God you are good, gracious, great, and glorious your ways are better than mine.
 - ii. Jesus you went to the cross that we might actually have abundant life and satisfaction in you. Jesus wants us to be satisfied in him, and he made a way for that to take place as he went to the cross for us so we might be in restored relationship with God.
 - iii. I am a son or daughter of Jesus I’ve been forgiven and have a relationship for eternity with the one who has made me. You are who my soul ultimately longs for the most. I am made to find satisfaction in you.
 - iv. How should I live- I get to find my satisfaction and happiness in you and the finished work on the cross and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in my life. When that happens it's much easier to live for the benefit of others.

Prepare for Community

Our God has designed his church in such a way that we all bring encouragement to one another, and one of the ways that happens is through engaging with God in his word and sharing what God is doing in you with others for mutual edification.

This is where we ask God in prayer what are you doing in me that you want me to share with others in my life today or at Community Group this week?