

Cooperating with the Spirit

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BELIEVERS MUST INVITE GOD'S TRUTH TO SHAPE THEIR THINKING.

Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.
Proverbs 4:23 (Good News Translation)

Set your minds on things that are above . . . Colossians 3:2a (English Standard Version)

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, . . .
Philippians 2:5 (New King James Version)

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.” Matthew 7:24-26 (New International Version)

BELIEVERS MUST DEVELOP A TRUE AND ACCURATE PICTURE OF GOD.

“What we think about God—what we think God is like—will determine the relationship we have with God.” James Bryan Smith (A.W. Tozer)

The Truth: Our Father is a good God who loves us.

“There is only One who is good . . .” Matthew 19:17b (NIV)

But I tell you: Love your enemies . . . ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:44-45 (NIV)

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 (NIV)

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (NIV)

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:8-10 (NIV)

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us . . . 1 John 3:16a (NIV)

“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

John 17:25-26 (NIV)

BELIEVERS MUST READ AND RESPOND TO THE BIBLE.

. . . throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. ²³Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. Ephesians 4:22-24 (NLT)

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT)

Reading for God's Larger Story

As you read, perhaps several passages from your Bible, mark the thoughts that impress you the most. Either underline a particular sentence or phrase, or put a vertical line in the margin for a larger section that impresses you.

After you have finished reading, go back and find the sentence or the paragraph that really stood out to you. Then open your notebook and respond in writing to what you've read. Writing something down will give you a thought to reflect on each day.

Use the acrostic below in your notebook each day.

S- stands for Scripture. Simply write down the verse or verses that impressed you that day.

O-stands for observation. Comment on the passage by making an observation about what God was trying to say to the original readers; that is, what the passage actually means.

A-stands for application. Ask: To what is God inviting me to in this passage. How will you live your life differently because of what it says? You might see an example to follow, a command to obey, an error to confess, a sin to resist, a promise to claim, or a new thought about God.

P-stands for prayer. Write a brief prayer to the Lord about what you have read, perhaps asking God to help you apply the truths of the passage.

Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray, usually not more than 8-10 verses: the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence in His Word.

Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. Sit in silence for several minutes, with your eyes closed. Become aware of God.

First Reading

When you sense that your heart is prepared, read the passage slowly. Pause between each clause. When finished, be silent for a moment.

Reading/Listening

Do a second reading, again moving slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea that seems addressed to you, that word or phrase that stands out.

Third Reading

Reread the passage up to the word or phrase that touched you in some way. Stop and repeat that word or phrase.

Reflect

Ask yourself, "How is my life touched to by this word?" Ask, "What in my life right now needs to hear this word?" Be quiet and explore thoughts and impressions. Let it touch your heart. Write down anything you think the Lord might be saying to you.

Response/Prayer

Tell God what word or phrase stood out and how you want to respond to Him in it. Read the passage one more time and listen for your deepest response. In silence then, allow a spontaneous prayer to flow to God in response to the passage. Be alert to any invitation you sense from God that He wants you to act or response practically.

Rest

Be still and silent for a moment. Enjoy being in the presence of God.

Adapted from The Good and Beautiful God and Sacred Rhythms.