

10 Tips to Turn Bible Reading from Drudgery to Delight

Embrace the Bible as the Foundation of Christian Faith and the Basis for

Understanding God (taken from online by Peter DeHaan, PHD)

People read the Bible for different reasons. For some it's out of curiosity and for others it's for its literary value. But for many, reading the Bible is a faith activity. It serves as a time-tested foundation for belief, deepens our understanding of God, and informs our spiritual practices.

Yet many people who want to read the Bible as a spiritual exercise often struggle. They go through the motions and get little out of it, or they give up in frustration. Perhaps they resort to skimming. Regardless, they feel guilty, a failure.

I've experienced Bible-reading frustration at times, and you may have too. Maybe you feel that way now. Perhaps that's why you're reading this.

The good news is there is hope. Reading the Bible can be a meaningful experience. It can offer spiritual insight that grows our faith and connects us with God.

Here are ten tips to turn Bible reading from drudgery to delight.

1. Schedule Time

To start reading the Bible with the intent of turning it into a regular habit that's both meaningful and enjoyable, we need a plan. Our plan starts with a schedule. What time of day works best for you to read the Bible? Don't pick what's left over. Give God the best part of your day.

For me the best time to read the Bible is in the morning shortly after I roll out of bed. If I wait until after breakfast and a shower, my mind has already raced into my day and Bible reading won't happen. I also know that the evening is out for me. At night I'm tired, lack discipline, and don't focus well. This rules out me reading the Bible before bedtime. Maybe you're like me, or maybe you're the opposite—where before bed is the ideal time and morning would never work.

Some people find that Bible reading occurs best when sipping their morning

coffee. Others make it part of their lunch routine. And some get up before anyone else in their house, so they can read the Bible without interruption.

Determine what time works best for you and then schedule it. If it's not scheduled, it's not going to happen.

2. Block Out Distractions

Once we've scheduled time to read the Bible, we want to make the best of it. This means removing all distractions. Don't have the TV or radio on in the background. Silence the smartphone, and don't let social media interfere.

Find a way to block out the distractions of other people. This might mean reading the Bible when no one else is around or everyone else is asleep. Having a special place where we read the Bible can signal to other people that we prefer privacy.

3. Ask God for Insight

The next step is to pray. For me the prayer is short and simple, such as "God, please speak to me." Sometimes I may need to add a bit more, such as when I feel rushed, am not well, or am reading a less-than-exciting passage, say Leviticus. The key is to pray in expectation that God will answer our request.

4. Pick a Plan

To realize the most value from reading the Bible, we need to be intentional about it. The worst thing we can do is open the Bible randomly and start reading. Yes, people have done this, and sometimes God directs them to the specific passage they need at that moment. I don't discount this method, but trying this approach every day is unlikely to work for the long term.

Other people have their favorite books of the Bible and spend all their time reading those two or three books. There's nothing wrong with having favorites, but if that's all we read, it's like having dessert every meal and nothing else. Just as we should eat balanced meals, we should also balance our Bible reading.

Here are some options:

Annual Bible Reading Plans: Reading guides give structure and purpose to Bible reading.

- Read the **New Testament** in one year. It only takes three to four minutes a day, five days a week. ***This is the option we picked for 2021.***
- Read the **Old Testament** in one year. This only takes ten to twelve minutes a day, seven days a week.
- Read the **entire Bible** in one year. Invest just twelve to fifteen minutes a day, seven days a week.

Chronological Bible: The Bible groups its books by genre, and within each genre the various books are in approximate chronological order, but the Bible overall isn't linear. To get a good understanding of the story arc of the complete Bible, buy a chronological Bible. This lets us read the Bible in the order the events occurred. This gives a great perspective of what happened, when it happened, and how various passages relate to each other.

5. Use Repetition

If we're on a massive, year-long Bible reading plan, the goal is to finish. But just because we read the Bible once all the way through, doesn't mean we're done. We can repeat the process each year, gaining new insight every time. I've been regularly reading the Bible since I was a teenager and have read the entire Bible eight times and the New Testament more than twenty. Each time I learn more.

If you're on a more focused Bible reading strategy—which I sometimes do—quantity isn't the goal, quality is. There's much value in reading the same passage several times in one sitting or reading it on several consecutive days. Some people recommend we read the same passage a minimum of seven times. Each pass provides new insight and after many reads, deep truths emerge.

Either way, repetition is good when it comes to reading, understanding, and studying the Bible.

6. Look for Connections and Themes

When we read the Bible, we need to do more than just focus on one verse at a time. Let's also explore how verses connect with each other. Look for reoccurring words or phrases, both within a specific book and across the entire Bible. Also, be open to discover an author's intent or passion.

I like to use Scripture to interpret Scripture. That way we can apply one verse that we understand to help us better comprehend another verse that confuses us when we read it in isolation.

7. Note Insights

Make notes as we read. Some people jot their insights in their Bible, while others like to journal what they learn. I organize my Bible-reading thoughts digitally, with one file for each book of the Bible. Over the years, I've made notes on every chapter of every book in the Bible. Don't let this overwhelm you. This took me decades to accomplish, and I continue to add to my notes each time I read the Bible.

8. Pray Back to God

Some people like to think of reading the Bible as God talking to us and prayer as us talking to God. (Personally, I think of prayer as a dialogue between God and me, as opposed to a monologue from me to God.)

Just as we started our Bible reading with prayer, we should end our time spent in Scripture the same way. Based on what we've read we can praise God, thank him, confess our shortcomings, and make requests of him.

Some people like to pray back the passage to God. This is a skill that takes time to develop, but once it's formed, it's a powerful ability to have.

A concluding prayer, while important, is an area I struggle with. This isn't because I don't like to pray, but it's because I too often forget to do it.

9. Apply the Passage

We don't read the Bible to amass knowledge to stuff into our brain. The primary

value is to let the Bible's words inform our journey and reform our life. Therefore, we need to apply the words of the Bible to our reality.

One amazing tool (and I don't know the author, but it's not me) is SPACE. This is a handy acronym that we can apply to about every verse in the Bible. As you read a verse look for SPACE:

S is for Sin: Is there a sin we should confess? Or a sin to guard against?

P is for Promise: Does this verse have a promise we can claim?

A is for Attitude: Is there an attitude we should emulate? Or one to avoid?

C is for Command: Did we read a command that God wants us to obey?

E is for Example: Is there an example we should follow? Or one to avoid?

10. Share with Others

Though reading the Bible is often a solitary effort, God doesn't intend for us to keep our insights to ourselves. We can share them with others. We should share them. I do this mostly through blogging and books but also in talking with others.

The key is to share this without sounding like we're lecturing or preaching. No one wants to talk to that person, and no one wants to be that person. And as we share, let's keep it a dialogue. Our goal isn't to just dish out what we've learned but to hear what others think about it too.

A great way to do this is in a Bible study group, where like-minded people regularly gather to discuss God's Word. This is another powerful approach, assuming the discussion isn't the end but merely the beginning of implementing what we read and learned.

Apply These Ten Tips

Follow these tips to turn your Bible reading from drudgery to delight. Yes, there'll still be difficult days we don't feel like reading or don't feel like we've learned anything. But if we diligently follow these ten tips, the good days will far outweigh the bad. And that will make Bible reading come alive for us.