

7 Ways to Read the Bible When You Really Don't Feel Like It

We've all been there. You're sitting and staring with the Bible on your lap, idly flipping through pages waiting for inspiration to strike—it doesn't. You try again—still nothing. You can't seem to get into a healthy groove of reading the Word lately. And that's only if you've made it so far as to actually open it.

You are one of millions who confess to struggling to read the Bible in their daily lives. According to a study by LifeWay, less than 25% of people who read the Bible have a methodology to read it consistently.

It's our overwhelming reality to struggle with reading the Bible consistently. I personally find myself in this familiar tango even as my relationship with God advances from year to year. Infrequency is simply human nature. The popular culprits responsible are lack of time, lack of motivation or discipline, feeling intimidated and overall struggling to apply the Bible to everyday life.

Despite this, when we find ourselves disenchanted with reading the Word there are countless practical ways to reinvigorate your passion. Here are seven helpful tricks I've picked up in my personal journey to fall back in love with reading the Bible when you're not "feeling it."

1. **Listen to an audio Bible.** An understated method of taking in the Word is audibly. Experiencing familiar text audibly engages your brain in a new, meaningful way and ultimately your spirit. It's also advantageous for fitting "Bible time" into a busy schedule. You can listen in the car on your morning commute, while walking your dog or waiting for your dentist appointment.

YouVersion's Bible app has an audio function with great narration. You can also look up popular audio Bibles like Press Bible or Daily Audio Bible to find the right "voice" for you. Don't forget to turn your notifications on for daily nudges to read! You'll be surprised how much this simple change can renew your experience.

2. **Try a new Bible translation.** This may seem like an insignificant change, but switching translations has made a monumental difference in my reading experience. There is nothing wrong with committing to a translation you're comfortable with and trust; however, it never hurts to explore and research more. For many who read a classic translation like New International Version (NIV), perhaps flip to the modern vernacular of The Message or The Passion Translation for a month. Or take it in the opposite direction and try a more formal translation such as the King James Version. Whether or not it's something you'll stick with long term, exploring a new translation will not only serve as a helpful challenge for your mind, but it also will enrich your spirit to learn Scripture from a new point of view.
3. **Read just one verse, Psalm or Proverb a day.** As mentioned, a common deterrent to reading the Bible consistently is intimidation. With just under 1,200 chapters and over 30,000 verses, it's indisputable—there's a lot to chew on. For those who grew up in church like myself, we often inherit a familiar anxiety around reading "enough." It wasn't until I matured in my faith walk that I realized how manufactured and spiritless this concept is. There is no performance required to meet Jesus in the Word. He simply wants you there. Instead of pressuring yourself to read a chapter or more, focus on one verse a day. You can also try one Proverb or one Psalm a day. These are excellent chapters to absorb one bite at a time.

4. Read the classic Old Testament stories. One of the most common sentiments in Christian culture is how little we engage with the Old Testament. It's four times the length of the New Testament and extraordinarily detailed down to a census of multiple generations in the book of Numbers. Despite its reputation as a challenge, we should consider it an opportunity to savor the richness and depth of God's Word. An interesting way to refresh your Bible reading is what I call "retracing your baby steps." Go back to the classic Bible stories many of us learned in Sunday School: Noah's Ark, Jonah and the Whale, Moses parting the Red Sea, Daniel and the Lion's Den, the list goes on. You'd be surprised how restorative it is to read these familiar "children's stories" as an adult.

5. Use written/video curriculum.

Many of us are familiar with Bible study curriculum of some sort typically in a group setting. However, we fail to take advantage of individualized programs designed for one to one time with God. Consider purchasing a video study on a specific book of the Bible you're curious about or on a topic relevant to you at the time. These tools are designed for you to unpack Scripture beyond a face-value read. As my friend experienced, it allowed her to slowly break down a book of the Bible with meaningful intention.

6. Read books "inspired by" the Bible. It may sound odd, but reading books about the Bible is a surprisingly effective way to bring new insight and energy into your experience with Scripture. Countless authors have taken a variety of approaches to drinking in the Bible. A few great reads include *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water* and *Loving the Bible Again* by Rachel Held Evans in which she wrestles through the process of deciphering Scripture mysteries and ultimately uncovering its living and dynamic relevance to our everyday lives. Another is

The Story: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People by Max Lucado, which takes the entire Bible and weaves it into a seamless, chronological story including additional, connective narration. These books will surely reignite your passion, perspective and appreciation for the written Word of God.

7. **Lastly, remember to give yourself grace.** When we find ourselves disenchanted with the Bible, the worst thing we can become is self-critical. There is no shame in admitting you struggle to read Scripture. if you find the Bible sometimes boring or you haven't opened one in months, you are not alone! The great news is God's Word is literally living and breathing. It never loses relevance; we just need to open our eyes.

Don't shame yourself into hiding to allow yourself to stay out of love with Scripture. You have access to the most powerful text known to humankind, written by God Himself. With that in mind, apply some of these helpful tips and your soul will be devouring it in no time. {eoa}

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