

Why Satan Will Do Everything He Can to Keep You From This Daily Habit

Blockbuster superhero movies and the latest iteration of the Star Wars movie franchise show the power of a good story. Grown men and young children alike dress up in costumes, stand in line for hours and spend \$62 on a bucket of popcorn just to watch larger-than-life heroes do the unthinkable. People are riveted by a good story that seems otherworldly, and they're willing to scrounge up the money and time to invest if they're convinced they'll enjoy it.

In my work with the Christian Standard Bible, I came across research from the Barna Group stating that people don't read the Bible for a few reasons but primarily because they don't have enough time or struggle to relate to the language. The stats showed that 88 percent of American households own a Bible, but only 37 percent of people read it once a week or more. No doubt their frustration with trying to understand words, phrases and concepts in Scripture is a reasonable frustration. However, as most preachers have told their congregations, people have plenty of time to read, but they simply don't want to make the time.

Why Don't We Read the Bible?

Let's assume Barna is right—that we don't want to make time to read our Bibles. Why don't we? I mean, the God of the universe has given humankind His Word. He could have given up on us when we disobeyed Him in the garden, but He didn't. He didn't let us hide from him; He went looking for us and spoke to us (see Gen. 3). God spoke to Luther through His Word during a time of the church's status quo, and it led to a positive change in the church. As we'll see, He still speaks to us

today when we open His Word and open our hearts and minds to its words. Isn't that enough?

Frankly, it isn't enough for most of us. We revere and even worship God, and we surely think the Bible is valuable. But the foundational reason we don't read it regularly is that we don't understand how Scripture works. We think God left a book behind thousands of years ago as a trail of bread crumbs to help us find Him, but we don't give it much more credence than that. We treat the Bible like a wise old man who left us inspirational stories from long ago but is a little out of touch with the basic struggles of our contemporary lives. We fail to see the unbridled power it possesses.

In the end, our struggle with Bible reading is often not because of time or effort or ability, but because we don't expect to meet God there. We know at some level that God spoke in His Word, but we don't fully understand that He still speaks to us through His Word. In short, we don't know what happens to us when we read it. We don't understand how God works on us through His Word.

Luther understood the Bible's power to change lives because the Bible changed his own life. His reading of Romans 1:17 changed the course of his life, and he was never the same. Not only that, but he also loved the Word so much that he dedicated years of his life to translating the New Testament into German, his native language. When it was published in 1522, he was elated that people "might seize and taste the clear, pure Word of God itself and hold to it." Luther thought the Bible was more important than any book anyone could ever savor. The Roman Catholic Church at the time didn't allow massive access to the Bible. Most people knew only what the priests told them. But Luther knew that God had met him in its pages, and he longed for others to have that access.

What Happens When We Read the Bible?

Learning from Luther, we shouldn't merely open the Bible and read it the way we read any other book. Nor should we set aside time to read the Bible because we want to be entertained in the same way a movie would entertain us. Instead, we should read the Bible as an assent to the basic function of Scripture.

Let's revisit some foundational passages we've already discussed. Paul told Timothy:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Notice the verbs: "Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable" (v. 16). They're active verbs that emphasize Scripture's relevance for today, not verbs describing a distant time when God's Word meant something to ancient people. Pair these verses with the powerful text in Hebrews:

For the word of God is alive, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart. There is no creature that is not revealed in His sight, for all things are bare and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Heb. 4:12-13).

Again, notice that the Word of God is living, effective and able to judge the ideas and thoughts of the heart. If Jesus is the Word of God (see John 1:1) and He's not dead, then the power of God's Word on the pages of Scripture isn't dead either. If the Holy Spirit speaks through the Word (see 2 Pet. 1:21), the Bible still has a heartbeat. The Word is alive. Luther interpreted Scripture as something that was applicable to him that day, at that time. The Roman Catholic Church

wasn't obeying God's Word, and the Bible told Luther so.

As a captive to God's Word, Luther was led by the Holy Spirit to understand important truths about theology and the Christian life. Today, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, our spiritual eyes are opened to the supernatural, life-giving truth of God's living Word too. When we open its pages, the Bible speaks to us and calls on us to "O, taste and see that the LORD is good" (Ps. 34:8). The Bible, in a real sense, admits us to the mind of God:

But as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Likewise, no one knows the things of God, except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, so that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God. These things also we proclaim, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:9-13).

Want to know what God thinks? Open your Bible. The Holy Spirit lives in you to help you understand God's will and character, to help you taste and see something fresh and new that you've never seen before. A passage you read five years ago might speak to you differently today, because the living God speaks to you through His living Word, right here and right now.
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