

Why Do So Many Believers Ignore Their Bible?

According to a study done by LifeWay Research, 9 out of every 10 households own a Bible. That's a pretty considerable subsection of the American public. After reading this, I went home to see how many in my family owns one and found a total of eight sitting on one shelf alone; this doesn't include the number of Bibles I have in my office at the Billy Graham Center.

I thought to myself, "That's a lot of Bibles!"

Despite the fact that most Americans could likely walk around their homes and count more than a few Bibles dispersed throughout, only 1 in 5 Americans have actually read the Bible in its entirety and more than half of Americans (53%) have read merely a smattering of passages to none at all.

This begs the question: *Why are people choosing not to engage with Scripture?*

Bibles don't just fill our homes; they fill our discourse. Many living among us have testified to the many ways the Bible has changed their lives. Some public schools teach from it as an important, civilization-shaping piece of literature. In places where religious persecution runs rampant, many around the world have even died to protect it.

So, in short, it seems that it is not the case that people aren't reading the Bible because they don't know it exists. Could it be that they *avoid* reading it because they don't like it?

The same LifeWay study shows us that for the most part, this is not the case either.

A very small subset of the population would describe it as harmful (7%) or bigoted (8%). Instead, far more think that the Bible is a good source of morals (52%). They would also say that despite the fact that it was written so long ago, its content is still helpful today (37%); some (36%) would even go so far as to say that the Bible is actually true!

So, if it's not because they don't like it, could it be that people don't read Scripture because they don't know that they should?

Well, the LifeWay Research study refutes this, too. People aren't avoiding Scripture out of ignorance. Pastors across the country, 86% to be exact, regularly include Bible reading reminders in their Sunday sermons.

In an effort to explain this phenomenon once and for all, LifeWay Research surveyed Americans asking them: *Why have you not read the Bible more?*

Some of the excuses provided by individuals for not spending time in Scripture range from the usual "I don't have time" to "I don't read books" to "I don't prioritize it."

But by far, most respondents (35%) in this survey actually selected "None of the above" as their response.

Americans' unwillingness to select one of the answers offered in this survey brought me to a compelling realization: Most people aren't spending the time in Scripture they feel they need to, but most of these individuals don't really know *why* they don't read the Bible—they just know that they don't!

It's not that they don't like it or know that they should read it; they're choosing not to for reasons that remain ambiguous even to their own conscience.

But while the reasons Americans so often allow other things to get in the way of Scripture reading seem unclear, our need for

God's Word is not.

So, what does this mean for us and how we live? Well, first and foremost, it means that as Christ-followers, we need to choose to engage Scripture both intentionally and frequently for the three reasons listed here:

1. It's the inspired Word of God. God used fallible, fallen, imperfect people to write the Bible—it's true. But these people wrote the Bible without error under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Second Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." The contents of Scripture were not arbitrarily created and constructed by random men—they were the very words of God written directly to us, His followers.

It is because of this that Scripture is so powerful in affecting such dramatic change in the lives of people centuries later.

Chuck Colson put it this way: "The Bible's power rests upon the fact that it is the reliable, errorless and infallible Word of God."

2. It's true. Despite its popularity today, the Bible was written thousands of years ago. Over the course of centuries, it's been read, copied, translated and interpreted by hundreds of millions of people and yet it endures.

In our modern age of moral relativism—where right and wrong are matters of mere opinion—having something that's inspired by God and thus true across historical contexts changes everything.

Culture shifts, laws are created and public opinion sways with the breeze, but amidst these changes, Scripture stays here and

it stays true all the time.

In John 8:31-32, Jesus is speaking to His disciples, saying, "If you remain in My word, then you are truly My disciples. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." The truths found in Scripture truly do set us free from the changing tides of the relativistic culture we so often find ourselves immersed in.

3. It's relevant today. People so often say, "We want to make the Bible relevant to our culture!" To these individuals, I say: "Guess what? It already is!"

If we believe the Bible is true, then it's just as true now as it was for Christians living thousands of years ago. Since God's Word is relevant to people living in every time, context and geographical place in history, our job is not to make Scripture relevant, but instead to help others see how relevant it already is.

Scripture conveys essential truths about who God is, who we are and how to remain in right relationship with Him. It also helps us as we seek to relate to the communities and cultures in our midst.

Living intentionally as salt and light on this earth won't happen on accident; believers who remain in the Word are able to bear witness to Christ's love more so than they ever could apart from its guidance.

And so, as lovers of God and His Word, may we live as Christians who don't just collect Bibles, but actually read them. {eoa}

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