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KNOW TO GROW

What's in your fridge? Would it be disappointing to find only a bag of chips? Sure. But why do so many people open the Bible expecting only a quick snack of soul-food? As though it's just a collection of random verses for a pick-me-up. God has prepared an elegant full-course meal - an incredible never-ending bottomless buffet. And you only want snack food? No way that's going to sustain you all day.

1 Peter says the Bible is required spiritual nourishment for your soul, to grow up into Christ. Psalm 19 says God's Word is "*more to be desired than much fine gold; sweeter than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.*" 2 Peter 3:18 says "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*"

The more you know about God's grace, the more you grow - in trusting the Lord, and in living out what He says, by His power within you. Not just knowing about Him, *but truly knowing Him* (John 17:3), personally and experientially. Transformed by His truth. Here are four ways to read the Bible, to know and to grow.

1- Read your Bible DAILY. The Bereans received God's word "*with all eagerness, examining Scriptures daily*" to see if these things were so. Jesus said "*man does not live by bread alone but by every word from the mouth of the Father*" and taught us to pray "*Give us Lord our daily bread.*" Priests offered sacrifices every day. Psalmists prayed daily. The first believers in Acts met every day as the apostles taught God's Word. The Bible says to exhort one another daily. Knowledge from God's Word equips you to encourage, correct, and train yourself and others. In Ephesians 1:16ff, Paul prayed for this "*without ceasing.*"

2- Read your Bible BROADLY. Think of your personal interests and hobbies. You're always on the lookout for more information. You develop friendships around your interests. You scan and subscribe to learn and enjoy more. Compare this with your time in the Bible. Is it even close? Instead of just picking one verse, try reading an entire chapter. An entire book. In one sitting. Alternate between the Old and New Testaments. Don't get bogged down, just read for the big picture. Read aloud. Read with a friend, or while listening to an audio Bible. It's a powerful way to absorb the flow of ideas.

3- Read your Bible DEEPLY. Psalm 19 says God's Word is more precious than gold. If you struck gold you'd dig broad and deep to get every scrap to enrich yourself. Try digging deeper in the Bible, section by section. The apostle Paul spent two years in Ephesus reasoning from the Scriptures in synagogue and town hall. In Acts 20 he reminds, "*I declared to you the whole counsel of God, teaching you*" in public and house to house. Because wolves will come to speak twisted things. He says, "*now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace which is able to build you up.*" You need a good study Bible, and reference tools including a concordance and dictionary. And these make great Christmas gifts!

4- Read your Bible PERSONALLY. The Bible was not written *to* you but *FOR* you. Pastor Tim Keller says if you read the Bible as if it's basically all about you, you'll never have a sure and certain hope since you'll always know you're not quite living up. Instead, read the Bible as all about Jesus. "Every single thing is not about what you must do in order to make yourself right with God, but rather what He has done to make you absolutely right with God. Once you understand it's all about Jesus, then you can know you have peace. You can know that you have His future guarantee - and you can face anything."

Pastor R.C. Sproul says "we fail in our duty to study God's Word, not so much because it's difficult to understand, or dull or boring, but because it is work. Our problem is not lack of intelligence or passion. Our problem is that we are lazy." That's convicting - even to pastors! Pastor Sinclair Ferguson says growth in knowledge comes by increasing understanding and experience of God's truth. What you get Sunday morning can't last you all week. You read God's Word daily to know Him better - His character, mind, ways - and His promises and power for your life. You need to be intentional about this.

Time? God gives everyone 1,440 minutes each day 24/7. You can read the entire Bible in a year in only 10 minutes a day. Many Bible publishers offer reading plans, including print, email and mobile apps, such as www.ESV.org/resources/reading-plans/ and www.ligonier.org/blog/bible-reading-plans/.

It's easier than ever to read the Bible daily, broadly, deeply, personally. To never leave home without your "*sword of the Spirit.*" That's all part of your essential intentional healthy Christian growth. As pastor John Bunyan said, "sin will keep you from this book, or this book will keep you from sin." Happy reading!