**3 Bad Reasons to Read Your Bible This Year…And 3 Good Ones**

**By Katie Orr**

’Tis the season for extra activities, endless shopping lists, and out-of-control eating because we’re all so stressed from the formerly mentioned activities. Come December 26th, we’ll be more than ready to get back to our normal routine and excited for the new year ahead. High on the priority list for most Christ-followers is to read the Bible more. Many will start reading through the Bible with great enthusiasm, but fizzle out before the next page in the calendar is turned.

I’ve been there. My guess is that you have been as well. Why do so many of us struggle to simply read the Bible consistently? I believe it has much to do with our motivations. It is important to pay attention to the desires of the heart, especially when we are setting out on a spiritual endeavor.

Here are three reasons why you shouldn’t put “read my Bible more” on your resolutions list this year, followed by three reasons why you should:

1. I read my Bible to make God happy with me.

If you are in Christ, God is already happy with you. Do I need to say that again? God is already happy with you! He looks at you with unconditional, unending, unfathomable mercy, love, and grace, because when He looks at you He sees the righteousness of Christ (see 1 Cor. 5:21). If you are trying to be obedient to impress Him, or make up for your failings you are spinning your wheels. Christ has already been perfectly obedient on your behalf. It was part of the great exchange on the cross: your sin for His righteousness.

2. I read my Bible to impress other people.

We live in a performance-based culture. It is bound to seep into every area of our lives and the Christian is not immune. I see this show its ugly head every Sunday morning—in my own heart as well as in the lives of others. We are a people fearful of what people think of us and we are driven toward actions that will make people think better of us. We must be careful to guard against performance in our spiritual lives. What we do ultimately does not matter in eternity if our motivations are more about impressing mankind instead of worshiping our Savior.

3. I read my Bible because it is what good Christians do.

For a long time, I saw Christianity as a long list of do’s and don’ts intended to make me into a good Christian girl. But that isn’t what Christianity is about. Following Christ is not about making me into a better person, it is about making me into the image of God. Christianity is not about behavior modification. Following Christ is about looking more like Him. Obedience is not meant to have people look at me and say, “Wow! Look at Katie!” The goal of obedience is to have people look at me and declare, “Wow! Look at her God!”

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When we move forward in “obedience” fueled by the desire to perform, the end goal we seek is praise and recognition. If we don’t receive it we will eventually give up. Yet God can and does use our bad motivations to bring about His will in our lives.

If you are currently reading the Bible for any of the above reasons, don’t stop! Keep going. But as you do, begin praying and working toward a healthier perspective. Here are three healthy reasons why you should read the Bible:

1. I read the Bible to build the habit.

This may not seem like a super-spiritual reason to get in the Word, but one of the biggest reasons why people aren’t in the Word is a lack of habit. There is no command in the Bible to have a daily “quiet time.” But there are many passages which point us to making the Word of God our foundation, our sustenance, and our joy. It is something that the Christian cannot live without.

But before we can experience the Word of God in this life-changing way, it must be an integral part of our day. Much of the Christian life takes discipline—telling our weak body to follow what our heart for God wants to do. I love the way Trevin Wax phrases it as “the gentle and quiet rhythms of daily submission”. When we go to bed a bit earlier in order to have a few moments to read before the day begins, or when we make space for the Bible during lunch, we are shaping our days around what we really want and what we truly need.

If you are not yet in a regular rhythm of Bible reading, here are two quick tips for starting out:

Get the quick win.

Reading through the entire Bible is an incredible experience, and something every Christian can benefit from doing at least once in their lifetime. However, if you are currently not in the habit of reading the Bible, consider starting smaller. There are loads of free Bible reading apps with short reading plans. Or if you prefer something physical, I have several Bible reading plans laid out into a bookmark. Either way, pick something that is a good next step for you. If you’ve never read the Bible before, pick a 5-10 day plan. If you tend to read a few times a month, but inconsistently, select a plan that will lead you through daily reading for a month. If you’ve read somewhat consistently this past year, then you might be ready to look at a year-long reading plan.

Having an accomplishment under your belt—a reading plan you completed from start to finish—will give you the encouragement to keep going. Don’t underestimate the power of the quick win.

Read with others.

Join in with your church if they have plans for Bible reading. Find an online Bible study group. (I’m hosting an online group for women through Proverbs in January). Grab a few friends to journey with. Read together as a family. Whichever works for you, focus on enjoying the Word.

Don’t let it turn into a source of guilt if you get behind. Just pick up where you left off, or skip the missed readings and don’t look back.

On my blog I have additional tips on how to start reading the Bible and how to get into a regular quiet time routine but the main goal here is to enjoy God’s Word through making it a part of your day.

2. I read the Bible to gain a better understanding of God and his plan for my life.

In A.W. Tozer’s book The Knowledge of the Holy (I have more to say about this amazing book), he states, “it is impossible to keep our moral practices sound and our inward attitudes right while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate.” Reading the Bible to check it off my list is a chore.

Reading the Bible to know God better is a joy. God’s Word is meant to be delighted in—savored and enjoyed as a way to know God better. Seeing the Bible this way changes (for the better) the motivation behind our pursuit of regular Bible study.

3. I read the Bible to worship God through responding to what I learn.

The end goal of studying the Bible is to give God glory. This is why we read our Bibles. This is why we build the habit and gain understanding—because you and I exist to be satellites for God’s glory. Like the moon which reflects the sun’s glory into the night, we exist to reflect the glory of God into the darkness around us. The end goal of our salvation is not our salvation. If it was, then we would have been taken up to be with God immediately after receiving Christ as our Savior and Lord. Instead, we’re still here. Why? Because God has a plan for our moments to be used for His glory. We are still on this earth for a purpose and as long as we are here, we get to learn more and more and more about who God is, then reflect and proclaim what we’ve learned to those around us.

The above article, “3 Bad Reasons to Read Your Bible This Year… and Three Good Ones” was written by Katie Orr.

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This article may not be written by an Apostolic author, but it contains many excellent principles and concepts that can be adapted to most churches. As the old saying goes, “Eat the meat. Throw away the bones.”