

## *Week Three:*

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# When is a Good Time to Read?

We've looked at the *Who?* and *What?* of reading the Bible. *Who can read the Word?* and *What does the Bible say about itself?* This week we'll consider the third W: *When?* *When is a good time to read?* Does the Bible say anything about this practical concern?

Some church traditions suggest that the best practice among Christ followers is what I'm going to call "Jesus in the morning"—based largely on the example of Jesus Himself in Mark 1:35 ("In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there").

While "Jesus in the morning" is a great habit, God calls us to something even more radical. Rather than simply a devotional time, God calls us to an abiding life. Let's take a look for ourselves!

## DEEP . . .

### *Context:*

Moses spoke these words to the nation of Israel before they crossed over to the Promised Land.

### *Marking the Text:*

As I mentioned in the video, this week I'm strongly encouraging those who don't typically mark the text to give it a try. Because of that, I'm going to lay out in advance what to mark and why.

**UNDERLINE** any phrases related to time. In this text, the primary word you'll be looking for is *when*. Marking will help us easily identify the texts that address when God's people should share the Word with their children.

**CIRCLE** the commands. In this text they are verb phrases that begin with "shall." The first one is "shall love." By marking these, we'll be able to see simply and quickly what God called the people to do and how He told them to do it.

## Scripture:

**READ** Deuteronomy 6:4-9

- 4 *“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!*
- 5 *“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*
- 6 *“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.*
- 7 *“You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.*
- 8 *“You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.*
- 9 *“You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

## Questions:

What is the primary command of this text? How extensive is it? (Watch for another repeated word in verse 5 to answer this—you may want to mark it!)

Looking back at what you circled, list the other commands. How do they relate to the first one?

Where were God’s Words to be according to verse 6? What does that involve?

When were the people to teach God's Word to their children?

How often was the Word to be in front of the Israelites?

## **ON YOUR OWN . . .**

Who in the Bible is said to have "walked with God"? Describe the life of one or all of them.

### *Context:*

Last week we looked at the Mem stanza of Psalm 119. This week we're looking at the Qoph stanza to see when the psalmist who had such a heart for God's Word pursued Him.

### *Marking the Text:*

**UNDERLINE** any phrases related to time. Again, this will help us answer the *When?* question.

**CIRCLE** references to God's Word (*statutes, testimonies, words, ordinances, law, commandments*). This will highlight everything the psalmist says about God's Word. Marking the synonyms will help us see the breath of the psalmist's words. In this stanza, you should find one reference to God's Word in every verse.

### *Scripture:*

**READ** Psalm 119:145-152

- 145** *I cried with all my heart; answer me, O Lord!  
I will observe Your statutes.*
- 146** *I cried to You; save me  
And I shall keep Your testimonies.*
- 147** *I rise before dawn and cry for help;  
I wait for Your words.*
- 148** *My eyes anticipate the night watches,  
That I may meditate on Your word.*
- 149** *Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness;  
Revive me, O Lord, according to Your ordinances.*
- 150** *Those who follow after wickedness draw near;  
They are far from Your law.*
- 151** *You are near, O Lord,  
And all Your commandments are truth.*
- 152** *Of old I have known from Your testimonies  
That You have founded them forever.*

### *Questions:*

Find every place you marked a reference to God's Word and list what this stanza teaches us about it or peoples' relationship to it.

What time phrases did you find?

When did the psalmist pursue God?

Does this give you any ideas for other times of the day you might want to incorporate God's Word? If so, when and why?

### *Context:*

John 15 is also part of The Upper Room Discourse when Jesus talks to His disciples in the hours prior to going to the cross.

## Marking the Text:

**CIRCLE** every occurrence of *abide*. This helps us see the key word in the passage so we can more easily list our observations and ask questions on our own.

**BOX** or otherwise **MARK** any other key words you notice.

## Scripture:

**READ:** John 15:4-11

- 4 *“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.*
- 5 *“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*
- 6 *“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.*
- 7 *“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*
- 8 *“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.*
- 9 *“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.*
- 10 *“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.*
- 11 *“These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

## Questions:

Looking back at every occurrence of *abide*, is it consistently paired with any specific word or words? If so, what?

Who or what were the disciples to abide *in*?

What illustration does John use to explain this?

Did you notice any other key words? If so, what were they and what did you observe about them?

How can you abide in the True Vine today?

## **WIDE . . .**

I hope that in the wide readings you will simply soak in and enjoy the Word! For many people, it takes setting the pencil down to be able to turn off the “assignment” part of the brain. If you tried setting the pencil down last week and need to pick it back up to be able to enjoy, go right ahead! Don’t forget that this is also a great place to make use of an audio Bible!

## Wide Readings . . .

**CONTINUE** or **FINISH** whatever book you selected last week. Learning to read book-by-book is a sustainable way to continuously read through the Bible without using a highly programmed approach. It gives adequate structure to benchmark progress but lots of freedom to enjoy the journey! Think of it being like the difference between going on a group bus tour with scheduled stops along the way and taking to the open road with your car and a map. Both can get you to the same places but different approaches work better for different people.

OR

**READ** Ruth and/or Matthew

During the Christmas season, the short Old Testament book of Ruth gives us a beautiful look at Jesus' ancestors. You'll see the tie-in immediately in the first chapter of Matthew. Matthew and Luke are the two Gospels that record the events we celebrate at Christmas.

OR

**READ** a Biblical book of your choosing! Remember, though, try to keep it book-by-book, okay?

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