**Reading the Bible Supernaturally – By Thailer Jimerson**

The title of my article comes from an eponymous book I recently finished by John Piper. In many ways it was rudimentary reading, but it was so, so helpful for anyone who is even the least bit intimidated about approaching the Bible. The book surveyed the purpose of the word and gave many helpful tips on how to approach it in a way that is proper, yielding the most glory for God and the most transformation for our hearts.

The doctrine of the word of God is no small thing. We are a people of the book, and as soon as Christians lose that identity because the tide of an apathetic, alliterate and disinterested culture washes ashore, we’ll cease to exist.

Hear what Jesus said: “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” (Matthew 4.4). Do you hear Jesus? Better to read your Bible than even to eat breakfast. He was quoting a passage from Deuteronomy 8 which Moses wrote to admonish a new generation of Israelites set upon taking the land. He warned them about their parents who grumbled in the wilderness, stuffed with the bread from heaven, and yet who still died because they disobeyed God. What use is a full stomach if your heart is empty of God, of his word?

We’re told that God appeared to the prophet Samuel “by the word of the Lord” (1 Samuel 3.21). In other words, the word of God is so pregnant with God’s divine essence (since it derives from his very breath, 2 Timothy 3.16) that when you really perceive what the Lord is saying behind the black ink and white paper, it is as if God himself is standing there, present with us.

We’re told this by the writer of Hebrews: “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4.12-13) In other words, you may think when you sit with an open bible, that you’re there with a magnifying glass, scrutinizing the text of God – but exactly the opposite is true. When you open the Bible, the Spirit uses these words as a scalpel by which to dissect the most hidden aspects of your heart, to lay your intentions bare, to judge and analyze you. When you pick up the bible, and you really read it, it begins to read you.

This is why Piper (and I) believe in the power of the word of God. Please enjoy a few pointers from the book I’ve written below, summarizing ways in which you might gain more from your Bible reading:

1. **Bible reading is about glorifying God – always**. Bible reading is not about gleaning tidbits of wisdom or inspiration to make you feel good. It’s about magnifying God, since God displays his glory in the word that humbles us into adoration. "The supremely authentic and intense worship of God’s worth and beauty is the ultimate aim of all his work and word." Piper says there is no song without sight. You must see God’s glory before your heart can rightly worship.
2. **Fight familiarity**. Often, if we find ourselves being in the faith for a number of years, familiarity with the Bible can discourage us from digging in again. But fight it. There is glory to be found if you’re willing to dig. Clyde Kilby: “One of the greatest tragedies of the fall is that we get tired of familiar glories.” You’re a worshiper and you’ve not plumbed the depth of scripture. But God is on display. Go find him.
3. **Read to understand the author’s intention**. Many of us read to see what a text “means to us.” This is poverty. The method is bankrupt. Sometimes that is helpful, but only *after* we have understood the author as he wishes to be understood. “I encourage you to think this way about reading and about the meaning of texts. The meaning of a biblical text is what the author intended to communicate by his words…The implications of this are life changing. You will never go to the Bible again simply to see if you can feel inspired by whatever comes to your mind….Instead you will make every effort to read the Bible in a way that opens the intentions of the authors and inspires you with that."
4. **Real reading occurs when the reality behind the words are perceived**. How do you know when you’ve really read? I can’t tell you how many times I did my bible reading in a perfunctory fashion so that, being the legalist I am, I could simply check it off my things to do each day. That’s what Jesus called “Seeing, but not really seeing” and “Hearing but not really hearing.” He constantly said to crowds, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” You know you’ve really read when, only after reading the text, you’ve also chewed on it and began to see the reality behind the words on the page. Read to understand, in other words.

This brief summary could never do justice to the amazing insight of Piper in *Reading the Bible Supernaturally*, so I heartily recommend you to pick up the book for yourselves. It will transform, and that’s a promise.