

Pray-reading Scripture: Engaging Our Faith with the Word of God

I. The Word and Faith

1. There's a major divide in the body of Christ right now over the place and purpose of the word of God in New Covenant faith. The evangelical streams place a high value on the word of God and knowing God; the charismatic streams place a high value on the presence of God and walking with God.
2. We miss it when we put the two in tension; the truth is not either/or, but **both/and**. Right behavior and even anointed interaction with the Holy Spirit detached from faith will never please God. **Neither** will “faith” in doctrines and principles that does not lead us into relationship with a real and living God. The revealed word of God is a priceless treasure that we **must** lovingly give ourselves to **in order** to cultivate faith **in a Person**.
John 5:39 “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”
Matthew 7:22 “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”
John 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”
3. We value and treasure and esteem and hunger for and pursue the word of God, **because** by it comes faith. That doesn't mean faith is the inevitable result of reading. What it does mean is faith is impossible apart from God revealing Himself to us.
Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
Luke 10:22 “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”
4. Faith is in the heart of the hearer. We get to choose to bring faith to the table when we hear. We get to choose only because God first chose to reveal Himself.
Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
5. Faith makes two simple but essential differences in our heart response to the word of God. First, it points us to a Person, because we believe He is the story and so all of Scripture is about the revealing of the One who was, who is and who is to come. Second, it prompts us to actively respond in our hearts, because we believe He seeks a response, and He responds to our response.
Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
6. Faith keeps pointing us with every truth we encounter in Scripture back to a Person, because He is the One being revealed, and back to a heart response to that Person because He has invited us into a living, dynamic relationship with Him where He moves our heart by speaking to us and He in turn is moved by the movements of our heart.

II. Reading in Faith: Pray-reading the Scriptures

1. One of the simplest disciplines to embrace that heart posture and transform how we approach Scripture is to pray-read, not just read, the Scriptures. As we read God's Word, we get to always be interacting with the Person of God and responding to what we see revealed about Him, not just taking in information. Do this faithfully for years, and it **will** birth faith, hope and love.
2. There's no formula for responding to God – it's relationship, but to keep my heart engaged, I do have an intentional focus: **I focus on the Person of God** – the Son who draws near to me to know and to be known, to love and be loved; the Father who made me, leads me and watches over my life and my world; the Holy Spirit who lives in me to transform me, fill me and touch me. And **I focus on my heart's response to Him** – in obedience, in worship and in prayer.
3. I talk to Jesus, and I worship Him for **revealing that truth to me**. I stop to appreciate the truth that He cared about me enough to come near to me and whisper truth to my heart (*Psalm 8:4*). I commit first and foremost to love Him for embodying and displaying that truth, and I ask Him to open my eyes to the beauty of that truth (*Psalm 96:9*).
John 17:26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”
4. I talk to Father God, and I worship Him for **being that truth toward me**. I commit to believing He is who He says He is and to cultivating intimacy with Him in that area – learning to trust Him and surrender to Him there. I invite Him to play that role in my life and to lead and shepherd me in a way that produces intimacy there.
Psalm 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
5. I talk to Holy Spirit, and I worship Him for **filling me with that same nature I've just seen**. I commit to yielding to His promptings in that area and walking out obedience in my thoughts, my emotions and my actions. I invite Him to possess me in that area, to continually remind me of that area, and to bring real conviction that writes that truth on my heart.
*Colossians 1:27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**. 28 Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man **perfect in Christ Jesus**.*
6. I find it critical to journal when I'm pray-reading the Bible. For one, to keep me focused – journaling thoughts to God and from God keeps me slowed down and in conversation mode, not just reading. The other reason, though, is **to keep what God revealed to me today**, not just have a good quiet time. I want my daily life to be lived more in response to what I've just heard and received in faith from God than it is in response to circumstances and experience, and that requires keeping what God has spoken.
7. God invites us into intimacy by revealing Himself to us, but that's not intimacy, yet. Intimacy is a process of God **inviting**, us **cultivating intimacy** by learning to abide in that truth, and us **expressing** the love found in that intimacy. So as I pray-read, I note where Holy Spirit is inviting me to a greater abiding or a greater expression of love, and I take aim at my thoughts, my emotions and my lifestyle accordingly.