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Women of Witness

TIPS TO BETTER YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

Stop Reading Your Bible

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*Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart.”
Psalm 119:34 (NLT)*

I have a request today: Stop reading your Bible.

Does that shock you? Relieve you? Make you angry at worst? Curious at best?

Read on, and see what I mean by this request.

There have been many days in my Christian journey when God was reduced to something on my to-do list. Somewhere along the way, I picked up an unwritten checklist of sorts explaining what "good Christians" are supposed to do:

Pray.

Read your Bible.

Go to church.

Don't cuss.

Be nice.

Being the rule-following girl I am, I subscribed to the good things on that list and waited with great expectations to receive the zap of contentment and happiness good Christian girls are supposed to exude.

But then something felt wrong with me. I still felt restless. I still reacted in anger. I still felt a bit hollow.

I was going through all the motions but didn't feel connected to Jesus. Others around me seemed very connected. They would talk of being "moved by the Spirit." They would hear from God Himself. They would clap their hands and shout "Amen" in the middle of a sermon that sounded like Greek to me.

I often felt like a weightless soul grasping at the air, hoping to somehow snag this Jesus that was just out of reach. Have you ever been there?

This nagging sense creeps in that you'll never get it — that you don't have what it takes to be a Christian. That's where I was. I lived there for a long time until someone challenged me to stop simply reading my Bible because it was a thing on my Christian checklist. Instead, they challenged me to experience God. To know God.

In other words, I needed to look at the words in the Bible as a love letter. God's love letter to a broken-down girl. A love letter not meant to simply be read ... but a love letter meant to be lived.

I won't lie. It took a while.

It took many days of sitting down with my Bible while praying gut-honest prayers. I told God I wasn't connecting. I told Him I wanted to understand, just like the psalmist in our key verse, Psalm 119:34.

I asked Him to help me. I begged Him to help me. Finally, one verse came alive to me. I literally felt moved when I read it. I memorized it and thought about it all day long. All week long. Maybe all month long.

I was overjoyed. I had a verse. A verse where Jesus spoke tenderly and clearly and specifically to me. It was Jeremiah 29:11, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" (NIV)

Slowly, I added more verses. Day by day. Chapter by chapter. And eventually my Bible became my greatest treasure, my love letter.

Now, every day I open up God's Word with great expectation and intentionally look for my verse for that day. Usually one verse among the many I read during my devotion time grabs my heart, and I know it's meant just for the day ahead. And then I attempt to live that verse out in some way, that very day.

When I make the connection between what happens in my life that day and why I need that verse, I experience God. I see Him active in my life, and I become even more deeply aware of His constant presence.

I'm sure some Bible scholars would probably take issue with my simplistic approach, but it sure has helped me.

So, back to my original statement. Stop reading your Bible. In other words, stop simply reading it because you have to cross it off the Christian checklist.

Instead, read it with great expectations of connecting more deeply and living more authentically with God.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank You for showing me the Christian life can be so much more than a checklist. I want to not only read Your Word, but live it out each day. Please give me the wisdom to understand and the courage to become more like You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

TRUTH FOR TODAY: Psalm 119:130, "The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." (NIV)

Proverbs 30:5a, "Every word of God is flawless ..." (NIV)

<https://proverbs31.org/read/devotions/full-post/2017/03/06/stop-reading-your-bible-2>