

Reading

Living in the Word of God: *"Reading the Bible daily equips us to live in the Word of God. This connects us to God's loving purpose for our lives. And if we truly believe that God desires nothing less than that we have life and have it in abundance, then the Bible will only guide us to make the decisions that lead to such a life over time." "Without a consistent connection with the Bible, we can lose our way and miss out on the grace and abundance God offers."*

More Than Mere Words: *"God invites us into a relationship through the words of the Bible, and that relationship is primarily with God's Son, Jesus whom we call the Living Word."* Are you hoping to get more out of your Bible reading? Try this three-step process for listening and discerning:

- 1) In a quiet place where you will not be interrupted, begin by praying that God would speak to you through the words you read.
- 2) As you read, stop when it speaks to you or when you have reached the end of that section. Then ask these few questions. What does this passage tell me about God or life? How does what I hear fit with what I know about Jesus – his life and teaching, death and resurrection? What life lesson is here for me?
- 3) Pray that God will plant The Word deeply within you.

Take a few minutes and try the three steps outlined above using Romans 8:31-39.

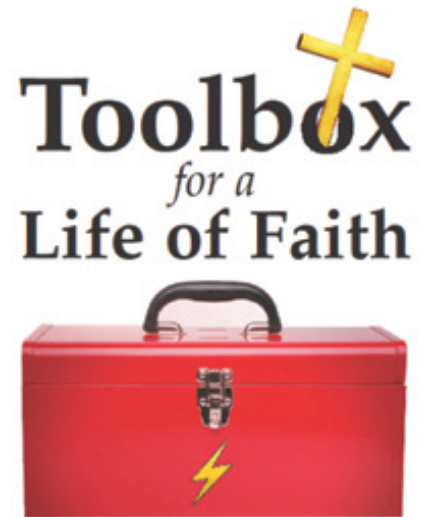
The Voice of God in the Words of People: *"All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness." - 2 Timothy 3:16*

I encourage those who are beginning to read the Bible to know the difference between devotional and scholastic reading of the Bible. The scholastic reading is focused on knowledge about the writer, the historical context and the theological framework or contribution of the book. A devotional reading will focus on hearing the text for the spiritual growth of the individual.

So how can we be attentive to the voice of God in the words of human beings? First, recognize what inspiration means. It does not mean that God used human beings like a "Dictaphone." God uses the personalities and life experience of the writers through the Bible's texts. Second, we recognize that there is a progression in the Word. This also means that, although we believe that God is unchanging, our awareness of God and the world is not. Third, read each passage as part of God's whole story. Approach your reading with the expectation that God has something wonderful to say to you.

A Tool for Devotional Reading of Scripture: *Lectio Divina* (Latin for 'divine reading') In *lectio divina*, one Bible passage is read several times in a slow and deliberate way, allowing the text to resonate within your heart and mind. In between each reading or phase, there is time to reflect and meditate on the words (when in a group, there may be discussion). The 4 phases:

- 1) Listen for any words or phrases that stick out to you. You may wish to write these down.
- 2) During the second reading, reflect on the text's meaning to you. Let the text sink more deeply into your heart.
- 3) During the third reading, listen for how the text makes you want to act in your daily life.
- 4) After the fourth reading, spend time in prayer, talking with God about what this passage stirs inside of you.



Sent into the World: If the idea of daily Bible reading seems overwhelming, then find a pattern that will fit your life. One day a week of Bible reading is better than none.

Based on "Real Faith for Real Life" by Michael Foss, Augsburg Fortress, 2004.