



God is light. Just as light reveals itself and does not hide, God communicates through His supernatural Word. Thank God for the Bible! No effort to study and understand it can be too much. Daily Scripture intake is a God-ordained means to develop spiritual maturity and godly wisdom. Half the battle is already won by having a systematic Bible reading plan, or else it is easy to lose interest in reading the Bible. Schedule a time and find a distraction-free place to be alone with your Bible and some means to record your thoughts.

Our normal tendency is to begin with ourselves, "I have this sin," or "I have this need," or "I feel guilty for not reading the Bible." If not careful, we only tend to be interested in God regarding what we want from Him. Approaching Him only to express our opinions and needs focuses on self and considers God merely a means to help overcome our problems. Let this acronym **PRAYS** serve as a tool to guide your time with the Lord. Spend more time thinking about God, listening to Him, and speaking to Him than focusing on using this acronym.

PRAY: Pray that God will help you see, hear, understand, and enable you to respond to the truth. Avoid haphazard and random prayer. Pray intentionally in a God-honoring way to make the most effective use of your time. Coming to God with a briefcase full of personal agendas doesn't always facilitate communion with God. As Prov 18:2 reminds us, "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion." We know people like that, who do not listen very well but are only interested in expressing their opinions on virtually every subject. Let's be a people who listen to God and one another and approach the Word in humility.

Ask the Holy Spirit to bring new issues to mind, things you didn't include in your daily plan. As you begin to read, He shows you what to pray.

READ: Like prayer, avoid haphazard and random reading. It is easy to read favorite passages or read randomly and miss hearing the total truth from God. Read intentionally, slowly, prayerfully, thoughtfully, patiently, and systematically. Bible reading feels more awesome sometimes than at other times, but don't allow your feelings to dictate your reading. God's Word is daily nourishment.

Let your reading be a time of worship. As you read, identify the author, the recipients, the location, and the purpose of the book. Look for repetitions of phrases and words, keywords that need definition, and surrounding context. Read enough to move forward, but if any verses convict or encourage you, stop and listen and find a way to record them to commit to meditating on those verses throughout your day.

Let your Bible reading serve as a guide to have a conversation with God. Pray back to God the truths in the passage, whether they be things to praise or thank Him for, things to confess, or things to ask for, etc.

APPLY: As the child of God, your goal is not only Christian thinking but Christian living. When the Lord points out your sin, just listen and don't defend your actions. Not every passage answers the following questions or has the same action steps, but here are some helpful questions: Do I need to think differently about God and the circumstances around me? Is there a promise to claim or a sin to avoid or a command to obey or a habit to start, or a truth to believe? Be specific and determine an area in which you will trust God and an action step you will take from your time in the Word.

YIELD: God's Word is intended to be obeyed and not simply to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. Obedience to God is not synonymous with moralization. While obedience stems from God's forgiveness and acceptance in the gospel, moral exhortations focus on "be better" and "do better." With the Spirit's help, commit to obey your action step from your application. Seek God's help in obeying the Word and being captivated by His love. If you fail to internalize His love, you can either err towards self-righteousness, focusing on do's and don't's and feeling proud of your own abilities, or you can err towards shame and guilt and feeling discouraged of your walk.

SHARE: Ask God for open doors and opportunities to share His Word in love throughout your day. Yield to the Spirit to guide your speech and conduct. You are a child of God that makes you a participant in His mission to the lost world, not a spectator. Commit to sharing the Word with others. And, speak the truth in love to your brothers and sisters in Christ to build them up. Jesus said, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. As you treasure His Word in your heart, you will speak His Word.

Structuring devotionals in the way described above can sometimes be seen as a legalistic checklist. But structuring time with God demonstrates how precious that time is with Him. As much as it is in your power, prioritize your time with Him as you do with other needful activities like work, study, family, meals, and recreation.