Experiencing God's Presence
Immersing Yourself in God's Thoughts

Dead words on a page. That's how folks often approach Bible reading and study. So they long for an "exciting" teacher to make the words "come alive."
Yet the words of Scripture have been God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). God uses them to connect with us and communicate to us what genuine goodness is. Inhaling these carefully breathed words of life can transform us into radically different people who think as God thinks and love as God loves.

Bible study, then, involves more than examination of facts. It's a communication of who God is and an immersion into God's counsel for living wisely. Each day as we read God's Word, God imparts to us a little more of what we need to know. We can look forward to hearing from God every day as we read Scripture.

Turning Toward God (Spend 5min alone working through the next 4 questions)

- If you were to read the Bible today mostly out of a sense of obligation hoping to finish the day's reading quickly or simply to get it done, how would this help you or not help you?
- Read the following Psalm then list situations and locations in your life where your attitude could be transformed by the prayer: _____

_____

_____

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Saviour and my God. (Psalm 42:1-2,5-6)

- Indicate how much you trust God to do good things in your life.

  _____

  Not at all A Little Sometimes Most Times

- What areas in your life do you trust God and what areas do you need to trust Him more? Don't be afraid to admit it if you don't trust God that way but would like to._____

Hearing God Through the Word

In today's passage, Moses reviews God's directives for the nation of Israel so they can live a life of wholeness and goodness as they enter the Promised Land.

We need to become thoroughly familiar with Scripture, not just for the sake of knowledge but to connect with God and be coached by God on how to live a life of wholeness. This won't happen, however, unless we trust that God genuinely loves us and that scriptural commands are the keys to the best possible life on earth.

Read Deuteronomy 6:1-2.

1. If the Israelites observed the commands of Scripture, what two results would follow? _____

_____

They would fear the Lord and enjoy long life. This helps us see that knowledge of Scripture is not a goal in itself but God's coaching for wise living. Coaching is an appropriate word because God comes alongside us in Scripture, offering instruction, models and encouragement.

2. How do these results challenge the common idea that doing what God commands will ruin your life and make it boring (because you'll let the other guy win or you won't get to fool around sexually)? _____

_____

We struggle to believe that God offers us the best possible life, of a sort of goodness that is appealing. The enemy of our soul convinces us that God is a killjoy, when God is actually the giver of real joy. Obeying God isn't difficult: Scripture helps us connect with God, and so the "burden is light."

Read Deuteronomy 6:3.

3. What does the text say would be the results of being "careful to obey" God? _____

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Things would go well with them, and their lives would flow with untold benefits in the Promised Land.

4. How do these first three verses support the idea that God is for us, wanting to produce in us a life that is whole and good in the deepest sense? _____

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With a holy, healthy fear of God (v. 2), we look to God as the One who loves us completely and holds the keys to the transformed life. Observing God's commands wipes away the falseness we gravitate toward and leads us to live in wholeness. God's commands teach us how to build genuine relationships with others. They do not lead to a horrible life of depriving ourselves of the goodies we want.

Read Deuteronomy 6:4-6.

5. What do the statements in these verses reveal about how we relate to God (especially compared to cultural ideas of legalism and obligation)? _____

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God was not like the false Canaanite gods who required whimsical acts of worship (such as sacrificing children). Verse 5 makes it clear that the Old Testament is not a collection of rules with no emphasis on relationship with God. Obedience is not found in constantly focusing on self and behavioural failures but in thoroughly immersing oneself in God: heart, soul and strength. Says J. A. Thompson, "Obedience was not to spring from a barren legalism based on necessity and duty. It was to arise from a relationship based on love

6. Why would love for God and trust in God's motives make us more eager to learn what God thinks about our human life and the way it works (“these commandments")? _____

_____

To obey God in a full-hearted way requires a belief that God can be trusted to meet our needs, to care for us, not to do us harm. We need to trust that we're not going to need to lie or commit adultery to get our needs met. If we truly believe God has what we need and can meet our needs, we're more eager to read Scripture.

Read Deuteronomy 6:7-9.

7. How might day-to-day conversations about God and what God wants for us (decrees, laws and commands) help parents connect with God as well as their children? _____

_____

Talking about God to a child can help adults simplify difficult concepts such as omnipotence and atonement and focus on basic but central truths (God loves you, God wants you to love and obey). This thinking process helps parents as well as children.

8. What do these verses tell us about letting our life with God permeate all of our ordinary, mundane activities?

_____

Constant exposure to God's words creates an ongoing conversation between God and the reader. God becomes "the subject of conversation both inside and outside the home, from the beginning of the day to the end of the day. ... The commandments were to permeate every sphere of the life of man.:" We begin to trust that God speaks to us regularly through the Word.

9. How do the truths in verses 1-9 help us know that God is looking for more than a righteousness based only on outward behaviours? _____

_____

Obedience flows from the central motive and activity: to love God with everything you've got. It involves having the textured heart of a deeply good person.

10. Second Timothy 3:16 talks about Scripture as being "God-breathed." How would you describe what God is breathing into us through our reading of Scripture? _____

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God is transforming our souls, "draw[ing] men into Christ, to make them little Christs," to make people the "same kind of thing as himself"

11. How do you think people who have thoroughly immersed themselves in the wisdom of the Scripture are likely to be different from other folks?_____

_____

Because they're coming to know God, they are developing a deep-down wisdom and goodness, void of pretension or religiosity

Pretend to be a poet. Complete the sentence to express what reading the Bible means for you.

Reading Bible fills me with God the way ...

- a clear, majestic day of fishing/surfing does a lean,
- flavourful gourmet meal does
- a baby needing to be rocked and finding contentment in your arms does
- _____