

A Reflective Approach to Scripture

The following approach to Scripture is only one example of a more reflective reading of Scripture. This approach is particularly helpful with narrative passages: helping us to see, hear and feel what is happening and letting this reality resonate with our lives today. By doing so, biblical narratives can unfold their potential to shape us. This gets lost when we reduce them to abstract lessons.

As we approach Scripture, we do so in the awareness that we are in God's presence. As we listen to his Word, we listen to him. This naturally leads to an interweaving of prayer and Scripture reading.

Too often, we only think/talk *about* God when we spend time in his Word. It is something very different to talk *with* him about his Word.



Please set aside at least 30 minutes for the following.

I take a moment to settle down and become still. As I quieten down, I become aware of my thoughts and feelings. I invite God to meet me where I am today. With all that I am, I now turn to God and his Word asking him to open my eyes, my ears and my heart through his Holy Spirit.

I read through the story and look at its context. Where is this happening? How does it relate to what happens before or after? The idea is not to do an extensive study, but to set the scene for the passage that I will be reflecting on.

I read the story again – twice. Slowly. Attentively. If possible, out loud. As I do so, I imagine the scenes of the story like a film unfolding before my eyes. What do I see? What do I hear? What is the atmosphere like – joyful, serious, full of tension...? What characters are involved?

Using my imagination, I try to see what is happening – as if I were there, watching closely. This will take some time. As I do so, the scenes of the story can come alive like inner images. This becomes the basis for my reflection and prayer.

I enter a time of reflection. In silence, I look at the scenes of the story and wait to see what catches my attention, what touches me, resonates with me, irritates me... When a scene captures my attention, I stay there.



This time of silence is spent in a receptive posture – listening, waiting, looking, not trying to produce anything. In order to stay in this posture, I spend this time without responding in prayer or writing down anything.

I might want to start by spending 10 minutes in this phase.

I respond in prayer. I talk with God about what this story stirred in me – my thoughts, feelings, insights... If anything resonated with my own life, I talk with God about what this might mean for me, what he is speaking into my life. I respond with praise, lament, petitions, questions – as is appropriate.

I look back. What was this experience like for me? What was precious-encouraging-challenging-difficult? I write down what was important to me, maybe in the form of a prayer.

An additional note:

Reflective approaches to Scripture cannot replace Bible study. The deeper we are grounded in Scripture, the more fruitful our reflection on the Word becomes. And the opposite is also true: When people have little knowledge or basic understanding of the Word, reflective approaches may lead to speculation. In this situation, it is important to carefully lead the reflection with enough guidance and maybe also give some expository input before or after the reflection on the Scripture passage.

Over the next months, I invite you once a week to spend such a prayerful time in Scripture, reflecting on Jesus-stories. The following might be a good starting point.

Luke 1:26-38

Luke 2:41-52

Luke 4:1-13

Luke 5:1-11

Luke 8:22-25

Luke 9:28-36

Luke 17:11-19

Luke 19:1-10

Luke 24:36-49

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drawing on various other materials
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