

The Original Soul Food

I never really liked reading my Bible. I grew up with a strong Baptist background. Every morning when I was young and growing up, my Mom would wake us up with a loud clanging bell and we would read the Bible and pray...every blessed day. Even when I went on holidays to my Aunt and Uncle's house, 'Daddy O' (bless his heart) in his stern voice would wake us all up in the early hours of the morning when the sleep was just at cruising altitude, and make us do the same thing...read our Bibles and pray. Little did I know that they were shaping my future, and introducing me to practices that would eventually shape my life and be the anchor that keeps my soul together. I am sure a lot of you can identify with what I am saying, no matter the background: Bibles, prayer books, devotions, and those disciplines of childhood that is shaping our adult life.

Times have changed now. There are no clanging bells early in the morning and no stern voice of Daddy O to drag our sleepy bodies and reluctant minds to read God's word and put it first place in the early hours of the day...though sometimes I wish there were.

I believe as adults some of these perceptions have not changed, but instead of the clanging bells and stern voices, there are other bells and voices that propel us to read our Bibles, or to pray, or to do whatever it is that we do to find strength for our souls.

Reality or Perception:

So, what shapes our perception of the Bible?

Some of us see the Bible as a Book with a set of rules for living. We do not want to be constrained by rules and regulations of dos and don'ts. We struggle to read the Bible because we do not see the relational side of studying the Bible and we sincerely think that

these rules will cramp our style and our lives; so we leave Bible reading for those who want to become Pastors, priests, and all those other people; while we 'normal' human beings go on and enjoy life.

Some of us read the Bible to tick off our spiritual checkboxes...Wake up (check) , get dressed (check) read Bible (check) pray (check) got to work (check) everything else (check) . We do this out of a sense of obligation to follow the instructions of our leaders, and even our conscience 'so that I can be a good Christian'. While there is absolutely nothing wrong in following the instructions of the Pastor or Priest, or other leaders, one cannot earn the title of a 'good Christian'.

Others see the Bible as an object to be put under the pillow as a talisman keep the bad guys out, or some more 'spiritual people' as a tool to conquer your enemies and claim your promises, but the Word of God cannot be reduced to that.

My Bible and Me: I read my Bible quite often, or so I thought, but I realized that I only read the parts that I thought were relevant to my situation and my life at that point in time. I also substituted Christian literature for my Bible, but I realized that those were just accompaniment to the meal, not the meal itself.

I started taking my Bible seriously when I realized that my life depended on it. Literarily. It seemed as if my life was going upside down. I was having so many issues in and there was no way out. Just to get my mind off things and see it from another perspective I picked up my Bible and started to read it. I eventually realized that I found a strange sense of peace and wholeness from just reading portions of the Bible.

As I continued to read, my desire to read the Bible gradually increased. I read it out of curiosity, I read it when I felt low, I read when I wanted to pray and did not know just what to say, I read my Bible for guidance and I read it when I feel lonely and I feel that no one understands me or what I am going through. I read it when I don't know what to do.

Now reading my Bible is like I am listening to my Oldest and Best Friend. You see, the Word of God has become life to me. The Word has gone from just being inspired words to Life itself. The Apostle John said it like this: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God'. God's Word is life.

I am not always consistent. I have days that I skim through or skip reading it altogether. But

I realize that I can't go for long without going back to the Word of God. I begin to feel out of sorts and disoriented, and things don't seem quite together anymore.

The Bottom Line: Some of you may not fancy reading your Bible or may have not picked it up in a while. I encourage you to do so. Take it one line at a time, one sentence at a time. Don't constrain yourself yet to any rules or guidelines. Just be consistent. God will meet you where you are, and take you up from there. You will find rest for your soul and strength for your life. The Word of God is also the only Friend that is bold enough to tell you as it is, and still make you as loved as the apple of God's eye.

The Word of God is Spirit and Life...the Original Soul Food.

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