

YWJ Teen Devo: New Year's Resolution: Don't Read the Bible

Barry Shafer

The Word

As you read the following bite-sized chunks of Scripture, look for answers to these questions:

1. What does God's Word (precepts, commands, law, etc.) do *for* us or *to* us? How can it impact us? (We'll call these impact points. You'll see why later.)
2. What action words are used to describe how the writers of these two psalms experienced God's Word? (You'll see these in Ps. 119.)

"The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes (Ps. 19:7-8).

"Save me, for I am yours; I have sought out your precepts. The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will ponder your statutes. To all imperfection I see a limit; your commands are boundless. Oh, how I love your law! Meditate on it all day long. Your commands are always with me, making me wiser than my enemies. I have more insight than all my teachers. I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey Your Word (Ps. 119:94-101).

The Backdrop

It's during the first couple months of a new year when we're all still thinking about those resolutions. Probably one of the most popular New Year's resolutions is simply to read the Bible more.

That's a noble resolution, but did you know God never said to *read* the Bible? Actually, the words God used to describe what we're to do with the Bible were a lot more intense than *read*. God is looking for actions such as *ponder*, *meditate* and *keep*. Of course, reading is a good starting point, but the real pay off comes when we dig deeper.

Psalms 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible, and nearly every verse is about God's words and precepts. We're looking at a small chunk from that chapter, along with a chunk from Psalm 19, which is sort of a mini-version of Psalm 119. Both of these passages are printed above. You may want to print them out for your students and mark the verses as you make observations.

The What

Let's start with the actions that you found we're to take with God's Word. Which of these word(s) below best describe(s) the action words from these psalms?

Casual

Intense

Purposeful

Haphazard

Sadly, most of our experiences with the Bible can be described as casual or haphazard; but as you can see, these are not words that describe how the writers of these psalms experienced Scripture.

The So What

Now look at the impact points—what God’s Word does *to* us and *for* us. Pick out two or three impact points that you found. Think through how your life would improve if these things were happening in greater measure in your life. It might help to journal (either on paper or in a document) your thoughts by completing this sentence. (The example below will help you with this exercise):

Because God’s Word [impact point]_____, this will help _____.

Here’s an example:

Psalm 19:7 says God’s Word refreshes the soul. “Refreshes the soul” is the impact. So, because God’s Word refreshes the soul, this will help rekindle my spiritual passion, help my depression and anxieties, and help me experience God more fully in my life.

The best way to experience this refreshment is to experience God’s Word in ways suggested by these two psalms: earnestly seeking, pondering, meditating and obeying. Reading the Bible is good, but the real impact comes when we experience Scripture with the intense actions God is looking for in us.

Try seeking, pondering, meditating and obeying a bite-sized chunk of Scripture. Rather than reading lots of Scripture, drill deep with a small chunk of Scripture. Here are some ideas:

1. Dig into a one-chapter book of the New Testament such as Jude, 2 John, 3 John or Philemon. Become your family’s authority on one of these books.
2. Own one chapter of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7. Listen to what Jesus says, and then go do it.
3. Pray the prayers you find in Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1. There are some awesome prayers in those chapters that Paul prayed on behalf of his readers. You can pray these prayers on behalf of your family and friends.