

SUMMER DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION GUIDE

SCRIPTURE: WHY READ IT?

The second foundational and essential spiritual practice we want to cultivate alongside prayer is engagement with Scripture. All good relationships require speaking *and* listening and our relationship with our Heavenly Father is no different. Scripture is the primary (though not exclusive) way we “listen” to God. If the God who created all things wants to speak to us, why wouldn’t we be eager and ready to listen? Yet, reading the Bible can actually be very challenging.

One of the reasons we struggle to read the Bible is because of false assumptions as to what the Bible is. So often we approach Scripture as if it’s a book of rules to be followed or an encyclopedia that merely informs, and when we want to know what the Bible says about a certain topic—say marriage, anxiety, or money—we flip to the relevant page and find out. But the Bible isn’t a rulebook or encyclopedia—it’s a living story of past events, future hope, and transcendent truth. Because the Bible is a story we don’t primarily read the Bible to find out “what the Bible says about x, y, or z”—we read the Bible to discover the story of God. And because the Bible is alive by God’s power we don’t read the story like we would a novel merely to be entertained—we read it to cultivate a relationship with the God who created us and who wrote the story.

The Bible is a small library of books containing several different genres (e.g. history, prophecy, poetry, letters, etc.) written by many different authors over the course of more than 1,000 years, and yet it tells one unified story about how God created all things and is restoring all things. And this story culminates in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

We are all tempted to create our own ideas about God, human beings, how the world works, and how to find the good life. But if we believe the Bible is the Word of God this means that as followers of Jesus, the Bible should be our ultimate source which informs us about these things.

So as you read, remember that the Bible’s primary intention is to reveal God to us. God intends for this “revelation” to guide your life and faith towards Jesus and his kingdom. The end goal isn’t to outdo others with Bible knowledge or check a box that says you read the Bible today. The goal is to grow in love for God and others and to move toward the life God created you to live in Christ.

PRACTICE

Spend a portion of your 20-30 minutes of personal, undistracted time with God each day praying *and engaging with Scripture*. You may want to read Psalm 128, Ephesians 2, Luke 10:25-42, or pick another passage. As you read, ask three simple questions: what does this passage show me about God? what does this passage show me about human beings? what does this passage mean for my life?

For previous week’s guides, go to redemptionokc.com/summerdevotions.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

PSALM 128 | THE LORD OUR GIVER

LEARNING THE WORD

1. Each week this summer, our Reflection Guide will include a spiritual practice for you to engage in during your personal devotional time. We've spent the last four weeks cultivating a practice of prayer and we will spend the next four weeks cultivating a practice of engaging with Scripture. Begin this week by reflecting on the last four weeks of prayer practices. Have you regularly spent 20-30 minutes of personal, undistracted time with the Lord? How has your prayer life grown over the past month?
2. After reflecting on the prayer practices, read page one of this Reflection Guide. After reading, consider the following questions: Do you find it difficult to read the Bible regularly? Why or why not?
3. Read Psalm 128 aloud. How would you summarize this Psalm in your own words?
4. The first verse of Psalm 128 says, "Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!" What does it mean to fear the Lord? How is fearing the Lord connected to walking in his ways?

LIVING THE WORD

5. Do you naturally conceive of God more like a cosmic killjoy restricting your life or a generous giver leading you towards a flourishing life? How should this psalm shape our view of God?
6. What areas of your life most need the presence and wisdom of God currently? What would it look like to invite God into those areas?
7. What hope does the gospel offer to individuals, families, and communities that fall short of the flourishing God desires for his people?

Practice this week: Pick a time in your day to spend 20-30 minutes of personal, undistracted time with God praying and engaging with Scripture. As you read the Bible, ask three simple questions: what does this passage show me about God? what does this passage show me about human beings? what does this passage mean for my life?