

Rule of Life Bible study – READ

One of the church's special prayers (collects) says this :-

Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may hear them, **read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them**, that by patience and comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Interesting then to explore the image that suggests we 'inwardly digest' what is written in the Bible. This carries the idea that we can take it on board and absorb it so it can nourish and strengthen us – do us good and help us to grow! This might not be a helpful image for anyone who suffers from indigestion so we are given some bite-sized hints.

As we read we can **mark** – do you read with a pen and underline what stands out from a passage? Try it here – with Luke 4: 16-21 (how do you feel about annotating your Bible?)

¹⁶ When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Can you learn one of these phrases and use it in prayer or reflection this week – perhaps write it out and post it on the fridge or near the kettle or computer screen.

How do we **inwardly digest** and absorb God's word so we grow in knowledge and understanding. As we pray we can ask God for his Holy Spirit to interpret and clarify for us – always a good idea!

We can ask the question – what does this mean for me today? Deuteronomy 8:3 says "one does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord". Jesus uses this verse to fight off the devil's attacks in Matthew 4. God's word will help us in how we live and thrive.

The Bible is not so much a book but a library of 66 books containing history, narrative, poetry, songs, letters, visions, laws, prophesies. As we recognise what we are reading we can explore various ways of how to read. One way with the narrative accounts is to read with our imaginations.

Read Luke 8: 43 – 48 – Imagine the scene with the noise and the bustle – take a few moments to imagine yourself in the scene – the woman, one of the disciples, one of the crowd – what do you see? What do you think? How does it make you feel? What will you tell when you describe it to someone else? Ask God what he wants you to hold onto from this passage. Can you note it down somewhere?

If God's word is like food to us then we need it regularly like we need our meals – we will feel empty without it. Here are a range of passages for you to read this week – Pray first for God's help in seeing and understanding, note down what you find, absorb it, and apply it during your days.

God bless you!

Exodus 34:1-9; Psalm 1; John 4:7-15; Acts 17:22-31; Ephesians 3:14-21; Daniel 6: 10-23

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