Crave Exercise 2: The Word on Engagement

Tucked into the nooks and crannies of the Bible are clues on how to actually take it all in. As you discover these clues, it becomes apparent that God breathed His Word to us in a way that asks for a posture of expectancy, an anticipation that the next word, or phrase, or paragraph, might just change our lives. God does not want us to miss a drop. At that point, we probably shouldn't read Scripture like we read a Facebook post or a newspaper or a Tweet. The word "read" is actually too thin. It connotes a posture of Bible time on-the-run-to-the-next-thing rather than Bible time on-our-tip-toes-peering-in expecting to find something. As you'll see in Exercise 2, there is a level of interaction that is asked for when we encounter God's Word.

The passages below are a sampling of verses that speak into how we are asked to interact with Scripture. To help yourself not miss a drop, consider these prompts:

1. First, find a spot:
Print off these pages if it's convenient. You may want a couple colors of pens or pencils. Find a quiet place, and allow yourself a big, satisfying sigh.

2. Then, do this:
As you experience these verses, make it a big deal when you see a word or phrase that gives you a clue about how to interact with God's Word. When you see an action related to Scripture (which can be described as commandments, Law, word(s), decrees, etc.) do something to help your mind be aware of what you're seeing: circle the action like crazy or highlight it to the point it bleeds through the backside of the sheet.

Remember, don't limit your study to these questions and prompts. These verses are just a "starter set"! You can find many more "Word on Word" passages with some creative searching. Prayers!

Barry Shafer | barry@inword.org

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NIV)

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with
all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your
hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along
the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them
on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 32:44-47 (NIV)

44 Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. 45 When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, 46 he said to them, "Take to heart all the
words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. 47 They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will
live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

Joshua 1:8-9 (NIV)

8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful
to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you?
Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with
you wherever you go."

Ezra 7:10 (NIV)

[10] For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

Psalm 119: various verses (NIV)

[You'll also see some great prayers here to breathe when engaging in Scripture.]

[11] I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
[12] Praise be to you, Lord; teach me your decrees.

[15] I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.
[16] I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

[20] My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.

[27] Cause me to understand the way of your precepts, that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds.

[48] I reach out for your commands, which I love, that I may meditate on your decrees.

[97] Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

[99] I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.

[130] The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

[176] I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands.

Proverbs 2:1-11 (NIV)

[1] My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,
[2] turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—
[3] indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,
[4] and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,
[5] then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.
[6] For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
[7] He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
[8] for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.
[9] Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.
[10] For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
[11] Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

Ezekiel 3:1-3 (NIV)

[1] And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel.” [2] So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. [3] Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

Matthew 13:23 (NIV)

[23] “But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Acts 2:42 (NIV)

[42] They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. [43] Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

[6] And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Revelation 1:3 (NIV)

[3] Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

So….now what?

Take a couple minutes to do one of the repeated words you likely just saw: meditate. Look at each action you have circled like crazy or highlighted until it bled through the back of the page. Breathe a prayer long these lines: *God, what are you saying? what are you asking me to do? What do these actions look like in my life?*

If you were to make a list of all the action words related to God’s Word (which is actually a great exercise), you would notice that interaction with God’s Word isn’t to be casual or haphazard. It’s to have intentionality to it, a diligence and intensity, an expectant posture that reflects the fact that our lives depend on what we are comprehending. It is to be, if you will, like a 5-year-old building a Lego project: the anticipation of the finished project helps create an air of intentionality and enjoyment in the process.

In an upcoming Exercise as part of this Crave class, you’ll be introduced to a couple of tools that have helped me adopt this expectant posture. But before we get there, try this on your own. If you were to use the passages you just explored as a guide for setting up your personal approach to Scripture, what would you want to include in your approach? Another way to ask: If you were to create a Bible Quiet Time in your life, what elements, that reflect the actions you just explored, would you want to be included in that time ?

I’ve included on the following page some Scripture engagement guidelines (and a couple practical ideas) that have worked for me. But take a minute to create your own. That’s where all the fun is. But if you’re stuck, use mine to prime the pump.

Guidelines/Ideas for a Personal Approach to Scripture

1. Have a plan that helps me be purposeful with a segment of Scripture:

- Own a small book of the Bible (a one-chapter book like Jude: What's its main theme? What is God saying in that book? What is God saying to you through the book? What are your key questions?)
- Follow a person through Scripture. God gave us some crazy, very human characters to get to know.
- Give my own subject label to all of Jesus' parables. (Example: Read a parable and then create a bumper-sticker takeaway. If it helps, use the *Friends* sitcom naming device, "The one about…")

2. Avoid "devotional moments" of hunt and peck reading.

- If you are in hunt and peck reading, know the context of each peck.

3. Don't be task oriented, be meditative oriented.

- Pray a prayer like this: "God, I'm not leaving this spot until I receive something from you!" That something could be anything: a warm heart, courage, conviction, a sense of "aha!", peace.
- How can I use my senses: touch, sound, sight? (and more on that in Gentle Exercise 3).

4. One more idea:

Follow this link to an excerpt from a book I had the privilege to author. The excerpt (entitled *Where in the Word are You?*) gives a quick overview of each book of the Bible along with ideas for how to engage each book with purpose and intentionality. If the link is broken, copy/paste this URL into your browser: https://www.inword.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Excerpt-Unleashing-Where-In-Word-Are-We-2020.pdf

Thank you so much for being a part of this journey!

barry@inword.org

References to passages of Exercise 2 for copying/pasting into Bible app (helpful if you want/need to listen to the Scriptures). You should be able to copy the entire paragraph into a Bible app search bar.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Deuteronomy 32:44-47; Joshua 1:8-9; Ezra 7:10; Psalm 119:11,12,15,16,99; Proverbs 2:1-11; Ezekiel 3:1-3; Matthew 13:23; Acts 2:42; Hebrews 11:6; Revelation 1:3