

STUDY NOTES

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES IN ADVENT

a series at New City Church

WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS

The following content is based on the message “Eat this Book” spoken on 12/18/16 by Brian Kruckenberg at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective communities.

PRAYER

Pray and ask God to lead the discussion as everyone gets to share.

THE SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 15:1-13

REVELATION 10:8-10

EAT THIS BOOK

In the book of Revelation, John interacts with an angel who tells him to actually eat a scroll of Scripture. The angel told him to consume the Scripture—to eat this book. As followers of Jesus today, we also strive to read and consume the Scripture because we want to hear the voice of God speaking to us.

- *Why are we, as followers of Jesus, often prone to struggling with reading the Bible at all by finding time and making it a priority?*

LIVING LIFE WITH THE BIBLE

When we do read Scripture, we are woefully comfortable with consuming portions of the Bible that have no resonance beyond our retinas. We say, “Ah yes, this verse satisfies my urge for today.” Sometimes this approach to the Bible ends in a faithful, dynamic life of commitment to Jesus, but mostly it just ends in reposting verses on social media, which unfortunately doesn’t typically result in vibrant spirituality.

- *When you do read your Bible, how is it easy to treat the words of Scripture like something that we skip around in until we find a verse that satisfies our desires for the day?*

The point of reading the Bible isn't just to actually read the Bible, but to live with the Bible. Living with the Bible results in confusion and anger and occasionally doubt; but it also fills life with longing and hope, vitality and peace. Because just like life, the Bible is a story. This means there are hard things in this Book—hard things to hear and hard things to obey. This is why we must eat it, sit with it, and love it. Some days it is as sweet as honey and other days it is sour in our stomachs.

Just like life. This is a Book for real life and real living.

- *In what ways does the Bible feel “sour” when you eat it? How do you allow it to challenge your way of living? Or do you allow it to do so?*
- *What kind of respect would you have for the Bible if it didn't include real life people and stories?*

JESUS AND THE SCRIPTURE

Back in our Romans passage, Paul said, “the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God’s promises to be fulfilled.” The Scriptures point to Jesus. As we live this book, it transforms us to be more like Jesus.

The Bible is the manger in which Christ is laid. - Martin Luther

- *If the Bible is a manger—a feeding trough—with Jesus laid in it, how does that image resonate with you this Christmas as you look at Jesus in a manger?*

HOW ARE YOU EATING THIS BOOK?

Jesus, who is the “bread of life,” was born in a town called Bethlehem in a feeding trough that would nourish the world. The purpose of the discipline of bible reading is for total transformation of the person. The aim is replacing old destructive habits with new life-giving habits. The question becomes: Are you letting the things of this world feed you, or are you eating this Book?

- *When you desire to read the Bible, what do you think the actual desire is deep down?*
- *Even when you don't have a desire to read the Bible, why might it be important to discipline yourself to read it anyway? What can that ignite in your heart?*
- *Using the ideas and resources list given, what are some practical ways that we can “eat this book” and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly?*

RESOURCES AND IDEAS

YouVersion is an app that you can download on your electronic device to give access to the Scripture anywhere you have your device. It also has thousands of reading plans to help guide you through the Bible.

<https://www.youversion.com/>

The Bible Project is a video-based resource that unites the Scripture in a story pointing to Jesus. There are reading plans for the whole year.

<https://thebibleproject.com/>

Peterson, Eugene., *Eat this Book: A Conversation on the Art of Spiritual Reading*

Eat This Book challenges us to read the Scriptures on their own terms, as God's revelation, and to live them as we read them. With warmth and wisdom Peterson offers greatly needed, down-to-earth counsel on spiritual reading. In these pages he draws readers into a fascinating conversation on the nature of language, the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina*, and the role of Scripture translations; included here is the "inside story" behind Peterson's own popular Bible translation, *The Message*.

Lectio Divina is an ancient way of reading the Scripture. Here is a website that teaches the basics of how to read through *Lectio Divina*:

https://wau.org/archives/article/read_think_pray_act/

The Revised Lectionary is a weekly plan to read the Scripture based on the traditional Christian calendar of readings. Here is a link:

<http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>