

## ***DNA Resource: Personal Bible Reading Methods (Help for the “Discover: Hear and Obey” element of DNAs)***

There are a variety of personal Bible reading approaches that can be helpful to use in preparing for your DNA gatherings (or larger LG gatherings or others). We want to encounter our living Savior through his word to us in the Bible, and listen carefully to what he has to say. Taking time to personally read the Bible, experience God’s presence and direction, and then engage with our church family to share and be challenged will help us to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (Jas. 1:22).

If you are looking for some direction with your personal Bible reading, and/or what you might agree on for reading with your DNA group, the following methods may be helpful. You could plan to follow one for a season, then change it up and try a different one. You could also choose to create some sort of hybrid of some or all of them.

Keep in mind that in-depth study is not necessarily the goal in the kind of Bible reading methods suggested here. More personal devotional reading is in mind with the aim of growing in faith and obedience. However, that said, there are some steps in some of these methods that do lend themselves to more in-depth study if you give yourself to that. As the saying goes, “you get out what you put in.”

### ***The REAP Method (HT: Austin Stone Church)***

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The REAP Method encourages 4 steps to consider as you read the chosen Bible passage.

1. **Read.**
2. **Examine.**
3. **Apply.**
4. **Pray.**

**(R) READ** — Read the passages with an open heart, asking the Holy Spirit to give you words of encouragement, direction, and correction (2 Timo-thy 3:16). Underline the verses that seem important and that God is using to speak to you.

**(E) EXAMINE** — Spend some time reflecting and writing about what you've read. Write down one or two of the key verses that stuck out to you. Consider, "What do I see?" Ask yourself these questions and write down your thoughts:

- What is going on in the passage?
- Who is writing and who is he writing to?
- When was the author writing? What are the circumstances that the author is addressing?
- Does the writer mention anything that might indicate his purpose or intent?
- How do you think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What do you like? Is there anything that you don't like?
- Is there anything you don't understand?
- What do you learn about God, people or yourself from this passage?

**(A) APPLY** — After examining the passage, apply the text to your own life. Ask yourself these questions:

- What is God's word for me from this passage?
- How will I live differently and be different today because of what I just read?
- What are the things in my life that need to change in light of this truth?
- No matter where I am spiritually, what would it look like for me to apply this week what I just read?"
- Are there any promises for me to believe in this passage? Any commands to obey? Anything for me to stop doing? Anything for me to start doing? Anything for me to tell others?

**(P) PRAY** — Pray through the passage and your application, asking God to change your heart and to change your life, based on the time you've spent in God's Word.

The goal of this kind of Bible study is primarily to grow in faith and obedience, not mere knowledge. Keep that in mind and be attentive each step of the REAP process.

***Swedish Method (HT: David Helm, Ada Lum, adapted)*** \_\_\_\_\_

This method gives you six things to look for in every passage. You can work through these things as you read individually, but they also are helpful things to consider for group reading and discussion.

1. What shines from the passage for you?
2. Did these verses raise any questions as you read?
3. Where do you see Jesus in these verses?
4. What is the Spirit leading you to do in light of this text?
5. With whom to share?
6. Why are these verses in the Bible?

1. What shines from the passage for you? (Picture a Light Bulb)

A light bulb is something that “shines” from the passage —something new or fresh. *What stuck out to you this time through?* Every time we read the Bible, God will be reminding us of things we’ve forgotten, and showing us things we haven’t seen before.

As you share with your group, God will be revealing different things to different people, multiplying the insight and learning. God does not intend for us to see different *meanings*, but to learn the one true multi-dimensional meaning, and then to see some of the many implications and applications from that truth.

2. Did these verses raise any questions as you read? (Picture a Question Mark)

Question marks indicate questions. You might stumble over a word or verse, or a connection to another part of the Bible, or a particular theological point. Try to answer your own question before going to others (e.g., commentaries) for help. Some of the deepest, most lasting learning we do comes when we press ourselves to search the Bible for an answer to our own question. The answer might be in the verse we’re studying, or in the surrounding chapter or book, or God may bring to mind a verse or verses elsewhere in the Bible. Stop, pray, ask, and do your best. Then, turn to others (whether commentaries or others) for another perspective.

3. Where do you see Jesus in the text? (Picture a Cross)

Where do we see Jesus Christ in these verses? Keeping in mind Jesus’ words, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44). He can be found everywhere.

How does the text point to Jesus, either forward (from the OT) or back and around (in the NT)... what does it say about who Jesus is and/or what he has done... how has Jesus fulfilled it, or obeyed it, or exemplified it, or benefited from it... what does Jesus in the text have to do with you... what in this passage helped you see more of Jesus and his cross, or what moved you to love him more...etc.?

**4. What is the Spirit leading you to do in light of this text? (Picture and Arrow)**

An arrow indicates a personal application for our lives. Identify and commit to something you sense the Spirit is leading you to do in obedience to this text. Make it specific enough that you can do it this week, and make it personal enough that it is for you, and not someone else.

When doing your personal Bible reading, you can regularly ask if God might be, among other things, 1) teaching you something, 2) telling you to stop or start doing something, 3) correcting some wrong thinking or feeling, 4) giving you hope through a promise to believe, or 4) in some way preparing you to live more effectively for him.

**5. With whom to share? Who might benefit from hearing what you've seen in the Bible? (Picture a Talking Bubble)**

The talking bubble is something to share. Write down the name of someone who might benefit from hearing what you've seen in the Bible. It could be something that you share with another believer, or it might be a way of sharing the gospel with a not-yet believer in your life. How can you share the joy, peace, and conviction you've been given by God with others?

Identify a specific person you might connect with in the near future, and think about a time you could bring up this particular truth with them.

**6. Why?**

Why are these verses in the Bible? Finally, try to summarize God's purpose in putting these particular words in his book. There are a number of ways to ask this question. Why is this passage in this particular book of the Bible? What might the Bible lose if this passage was left out? What's the author's main point? Try to sum up your answer in one sentence.

## The 4 Questions Method (HT: Soma/Saturate)

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Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to speak through his word. It's his job to guide us into all truth and to glorify Jesus (John 16:13-14).

Read the passage and answer the 4 Questions below.

1. **Who is God?**
2. **What has he done?**
3. **Who am I/are we in light of that work?**
4. **How do I/we get to live?**

1. **Who is God?** What does the text say about the character and nature of God?

The Bible is God's story –Father, Son, Spirit— so we begin by asking about how his character and nature are revealed in what we're reading. The story is about Him! Look for specific references to his attributes: holy, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, ever present, unchanging, compassionate, gracious, patient, loving, kind, good, gentle, etc. In narrative portions, look for implied references to his attributes. What does the story reveal about his character and nature as Father, Son, and Spirit?

2. **What has he (God) done?** What does the text say about the work of God (especially regarding the Person and work of Jesus)?

God's work throughout all of human history is diverse and magnificent. All of it is worth proclaiming! However, the person and work of Jesus is revealed on every page of the Bible (Luke 24:27). He is the hero and the main character. The Spirit does not want us to miss Jesus!

Look for references to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, either through foreshadowing (saving Noah in the flood, redeeming Israel from slavery in Egypt, King David as a man after God's own heart), through prophecy (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53), or through the New Testament story of Jesus' earthly life and the establishment of his church. This ensures a uniquely Christian, gospel-centered answer to this question.

3. **Who are we in light of that (in light of what God has done)?**

What does the text say about our identity? God has always been working to save “a people for his own possession” (1 Peter 2:9). Throughout the Bible, note the things that are true of God’s people. This adds depth and richness to our understanding of who we are as New Covenant believers. For example, the Levitical priests were anointed and set apart for special service to God. Now, we are all anointed with God’s Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21-22), and, because of Jesus, are all a part of God’s “royal priesthood,” set apart for special service to God.

#### 4. How do we get to live?

In light of all of this, how does it change the way we live? When reading the Bible, we almost always start with the question, “How does this apply to my life?” But rightly motivated, gospel-centered action flows out of an understanding of who God is, what he’s done, and who we are in light of God’s character and work. Rather than starting with this question, end with it.

And then, take action! Jesus warns against being merely a hearer of his word but not a doer (Mt. 7:24-27). The gospel motivates and empowers us to live in an entirely new way.

#### *The 6 Questions Method (HT: Fellowship Paragould / Matthew’s Table)*

(This method is very similar to the “4 Questions Method” above. It tweaks and fills up the the 4 Questions to 6 Questions.)

Somebody has said, “The Scriptures are shallow enough for a babe to come and drink without fear of drowning and deep enough for a theologians to swim in without ever touching the bottom.”

The least educated among us need not be intimidated at learning the good news about Jesus directly from God’s Word. The most educated among us need not fear of having nothing to learn of that gospel (good news about Jesus) directly from God’s Word.

The 6 questions below are one way to read the Bible individually and/or as a smaller group together. They are geared for any level of learning for the purpose of helping everyone experience more in the ocean of the gospel.

Following the 6 questions can either give you a great 10 minute wade with God through His Word, an all day deep sea diving adventure, or anywhere between! These questions can also guide a great conversation with a listener who may not even have the ability to read.

1. **What is God saying?**
2. **Who is God?**
3. **What had God noen in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?**
4. **Who am I/are we?**
5. **What should I/we do?**
6. **Why is the Spirit teaching me/us these truths now?**

### 1. **What is God saying?**

This question can be answered by a new reader . . .

- With a simple restatement of the Scripture in one's own words
- By noting a single verse from the text that really stands out
- By stating one or more main points

This question can be answered by a more experienced reader . . .

- By comparing translations
- By reading the accompanying notes from a Study Bible or Commentary
- By using inductive Bible study techniques of observation and interpretation and other hermeneutical methods

### 2. **Who is God?**

This question can be answered by a new reader. . .

- By naming the character of God as stated directly in the text: "God is Love"
- By naming something you learn about what God is like from the story "God is patient"

This question can be answered by a more experienced reader . . .

- By answering in view of God as Father, Son, and Spirit
- By referring to lists of God's attributes in resources such as systematic theologies
- By consulting commentaries, sermons, and other media

### 3. What has God done in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

This question can be answered by a new reader . . .

- By simply stating how Jesus' death is good news in view of your sin in view of this Scripture
- By asking 1) How did Jesus live the truth of this text out perfectly (How is He better?) 2) How does what I'm reading make Jesus' death needed and enough 3) How is Jesus' resurrection really necessary in light of what I'm reading and how does it give hope?

This question can be answered by a more experienced reader . . .

- By noting the specific way that God is resisted and/or sin is destructive, how you are guilty or suffering, and how Jesus comes to the rescue
- By adding to the categories of Jesus life, death and resurrection . . . His reign and His return
- By "plugging in" the text at hand to larger story of the kingdom in view of Vaughn Roberts 8 kingdom "moves" in the biblical story 1) The Pattern of the Kingdom (Gen 1- 2) 2) The Perished Kingdom (Gen 3 - 11) 3) The Promised Kingdom (Gen 3 - 50) 4) The Partial Kingdom (OT story of Israel) 5) The Prophesied Kingdom (Prophets) 6) The Present Kingdom (Gospels) 7) The Proclaimed Kingdom (Acts/Letters) 8) The Perfected Kingdom (Rev)
- By listening to a Christ-centered sermon on the text

### 4. Who am I? (Who are we?)

This question can be answered by a new reader . . .

- By naming a position you have in Jesus "I am forgiven"
- By naming a promise you have through Jesus "I am not alone"
- By naming a command you have in Jesus "I am sent"
- By reading through the Helps section for Question 4 in FC resource doc.

This question can be answered by a more experienced reader . . .

- By contrasting and comparing who you were outside of Jesus to who you are in Jesus (I was guilty, I am not guilty; I was lost, I am found; I was a slave, I'm a son)
- By asking the question in view of Father, Son and Spirit "Who am I before the Father? Who am I in the Son? Who am I by the Spirit?"
- By placing yourself in the "Story": "Who am I in view of the story, then and now?"
- By considering how your view of who you are is shaping your view of what you need and what you want. By considering the lies your idols are telling you about who you



are and what you need and want. "I want control vs. I am secure in God's control" "I long for acceptance vs. I am approved by God."

## 5. What should I do?

This question can be answered by a new reader . . .

- By stating a general command: "I should love others"
- By stating a specific response: "I should love my co-worker who annoys me"

This question can be answered by a more experienced reader . . .

- By stating a specific action of obedience: "I will take my co-worker who annoys me out for lunch and ask to hear their story"
- By texting someone their call to gospel obedience and ask them to pray and hold them accountable.
- By determining habits to stop and habits to start in making the changes called for.

## 6. Why is the Spirit teaching me these truths now?

This question can be answered by a new reader . . .

- Taking a moment to consider how what is being learned connects to present life.
- Praying in view of what you've read for understanding and change

This question can be answered by a more experienced reader . . .

- Journaling through prayer and listening
- Texting a fellow fight club member and asking them "Why do you think the Spirit wants ME to be hearing this now in light of what you know of me?"

## The Coaching Questions Method

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These are questions common to a spiritual coaching relationship, adapted and applied to Bible reading and application.

Read whatever passage you've chosen, and ask yourself the following questions.

### 1. Where's Jesus in the text?

I.e., How does the text point to Jesus, either forward (from the OT) or back and around (in the NT)... what does it say about who Jesus is and/or what he

has done... how has Jesus fulfilled it, or obeyed it, or exemplified it, or benefited from it... what does Jesus in the text have to do with you... etc.?

**2. What are you celebrating from the text?**

I.e., What's got you excited about it... how is God encouraging and building you up through it... in what ways is it comforting for you... what promises does it offer in which to hope...etc.?

**3. What's challenging you from the text?**

I.e., How is God challenging you with the text... what is he calling you to do or say or feel, or not do or say or feel through the text... what is there in the text to obey in thought, word, or deed... etc.?

**4. What are you doing / will you do about it?**

I.e., What are you doing in response to God's challenge... what steps are you taking to obey... etc.?

**5. How can others help?**

I.e., In what ways can your Life Group, or DNA, or broader church family help you trust, hope, obey, etc.?

**6. How can you and others pray?**

I.e., What specific prayer requests could you share with others related to all of the above? How can you shape a prayer from the text and your insights and applications?

***"Megan's" Method (HT: M.F.)***

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Read whatever passage you've chosen, and ask yourself the questions below.

**1. How does this passage encourage me to worship God?**

**2. What is God calling me to do in this passage?**

3. Is this passage convicting me of a sin that I need to repent of?
4. What can I thank God for from this passage?
5. What does this passage encourage me to ask for?
6. Other prayer request God has laid on my heart:
7. Prayer that God has answered:

### The POMGAP Method (HT: Treasuring Christ Church)

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POMGAP = Pray. Observations/questions. Main Idea. Gospel. Application. Pray.

This method has the potential to be quite a bit more hefty than the above methods. There's the potential for a bit more in-depth study. However, that will be up to you. This method can be quick and simple, or you can spend more time at each stage. Don't be paralyzed if you don't have time to ask all the questions listed below. They are there so that if you have time you can use them. But the point is that by the Spirit we can read, meditate, listen, enjoy, be humble to submit to, and apply God's word. It is there where we get to enjoy Jesus and grow to be like him. His power is at work in a unique way every time you read.

#### **P- Pray**

The point here is that this is not mechanical. This is spiritual. The Holy Spirit is alive in the words of Scripture and we are inviting him in to change our lives, illumine our minds with understanding, awaken our spiritual eyes, and stir our hearts to deep affection.

#### **O- Observations/Questions**

Write down any observations or questions that come to mind including other passages that teach similar themes or use similar words.

Look for repeating words, other patterns, characters, NT use of OT passages, transition/connecting words like "therefore, because, for, but, and, in order that, so that, although," prepositions (like "with Christ" in Gal. 2:20), question and answers in a text, cause and effect, means, lists, pronouns (asking who is he talking about), comparisons, major shifts in themes or stories, emotions, tone, poetic images or parallelism, etc.

## **M- Main Idea**

In this section we take what we observed above, we interpret it and seek to arrive at the author's meaning communicated in a timeless truth. Write down the main idea of a passage, chapter, book or paragraph (depending on how much you are reading) in a few sentences to describe "What is the author's meaning? (Not what does it mean to you? or What do you feel about the text?) Ask "What is he (the author) trying to communicate to us?" and write it as a timeless truth.

Keep in mind literary context (genre), historical context (use text more than history), textual context (composition- why is this passage where it is in the chapter, or book or Bible as a whole), and theological context (this text ultimately is about God and him making himself known to us and through us in Jesus)

## **G- Gospel**

Check yourself here. The main idea or timeless truth will always include us knowing the person and/or work of Jesus. Write down where you see Jesus- his character and/or his work in the passage? If you are...

In the Old Testament... Jesus says that the Scriptures speak about him and that in Him all the promises are yes and Amen (cf. Luke 24:27, 44, John 5:46, 2 Cor. 1:20). Platt says to read OT narrative look for meaning on 3 levels: the individual history, the national history, and the redemptive history. Especially as you deal with the redemptive history level you will be asking how this text points towards who Jesus is and what he has done, especially in its literary context, but with a keen eye for key words or themes or how other authors in other genres treat these narratives.

In the New Testament... Jesus and how he relates to us is much more explicit to the meaning of the text. Although this gets to some application you can also see how the text might be communicating to us our Identity in him, His Provision and Promise for us, and/or the Process of change, growth, maturity he is taking us through because we are in Christ.

Identity in Christ (e.g., new creation, righteous, saint, holy, Spirit-filled, etc.)

Provision/Promises for us by Christ (e.g., chosen, called, made alive, give faith and repentance, forgiven, justified, adopted, sanctified, glorification)

Process empowered by Christ (e.g., God is patient with us, he will get us to the end, this text tells us our spiritual maturity is a journey not an instant moment.)

### **A- Application**

Eternal, Internal, External

These are not just three words but three questions that you ask yourself as you seek to apply God's word (taken in part from Ed Marcelle at Acts 29 Boot Camp in Raleigh, NC, February 2009). Whether you are hearing a sermon, reading a passage of Scripture or working on a book study, we can ask these three questions to apply the Scripture. 1) *Eternal*: What can you learn about God? 2) *Internal*: What is God teaching you about your heart? 3) *External*: What (and with whom) can you share with others?

The thread that ties these three together is the G- the gospel of Jesus. So we are applying the gospel as we apply the Scriptures to our lives. *Eternal*: Where can we see and know God's glory the clearest? At the cross (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5). 2) *Internal*: Where can we get help for our sinful heart? From Jesus, the Savior and substitute for sinners (1 Peter 3:18a). 3) *External*: What do we need to share with others, either believers or unbelievers? The gospel man - Jesus Christ. The message - Christ perfect yet crucified then raised from dead on the third day, and the gospel's power and benefits (Romans 1:16).

*Eternal*:

*Internal*: What is God convicting me of? (How should I think?, What should I do? Where should I go?) Who am I in Christ? (see the gospel section above)

*External*: Who will I share with? or teach?

### **P- Pray these things, this Scripture into your life.**

E.g., Colossians 1:9-21

God cause me to love your Son. Oh Father change me into his likeness, make me more like him. Give me His strength that I might endure in my marriage and I might be patient with my kids. God turn me from my sin of forgetting you and thanklessness. God help me believe in the power of Jesus I see here. His power to make me fit (to qualify me) to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. God give me eyes to see your beauty and grace. Grant me peace and joy.