

Reading Relationally

Revelations from the Holy Spirit often come from “Reading Relationally”. This means talking **to** God **about** what you are reading **while** you are reading His Word. For example: Interact with Him as you read, as you would in a conversation with a friend. Ask questions, ask Him to explain & clarify for you, give Him encouraging words of thanks, praise & amazement & exclamation. Remember John 10:27 “My sheep (that’s you) hear My voice, I know them and they follow Me. Pray this from Luke 24:45... “Lord, open my mind to understand the scriptures.” Ask Him...Lord, what do You want to say?” & when He speaks, respond to Him right then. Enjoy!

Imagine you have just invited a friend over for coffee. Your friend has come to hear about the wonderful trip you just took. Your friend kindly lets you know that they have an hour to visit and then they have to pick up their son. At your friend’s invitation, you begin sharing in great detail about your trip, the amazing things you saw and did, and the awesome things God taught you. It is obvious that your friend is listening with great interest, but they never comment on anything that you are sharing. Yes, there is eye contact--your friend is paying attention--but they never ask any questions, express wows, or interact with you over your story. Well the hour is up and they politely let you know that they must go pick up their son. You express how glad you are that they stopped by, and you say good-bye. Hmm...you think, I am so glad my friend was here, but I feel empty. My friend never commented or asked questions...I know they were here for an hour, but the lack of interaction leaves me feeling disconnected and wondering if they really care. Were they really listening? I think this is how we can make God feel when we are reading His Word. When we don’t interact & dialogue with Him, I think He misses the interaction too.

Interestingly enough, a mutual friend pulls into the driveway and out your kitchen window you hear your friend that was just leaving, expressing in great detail how wonderful it was to hear about your amazing trip, the incredible things you did and saw, and God’s amazing handiwork in all your travels. At that moment I wonder, gee, why didn’t they share that with me? Let me suggest this: I believe that this is often what we do to God. Like the friend that was visiting & talking later to your mutual friend, we go “talk about” God after being with Him, but we don’t “talk to” God in response to what we are reading in His word “as” we are reading. We spend perhaps an hour with Him, we listen and maybe even take notes, but we never really *engage* with the Author of the Bible that we are reading. I spent too many years reading as an observer rather than meeting with our Savior personally for the relationship for which I was created. Miraculously, He desires to have an interactive conversation with us, literally, talking with us out of the pages of His Word (Heb. 4:12). We must remember to engage with Him at that moment while we are in His Word by:

1. Asking questions as we go
 2. Respond in “amazement” to a particular character’s actions
 3. Saying “Thank you.”
 4. Expressing “wows” in response to what we just read
 5. Confess “right then” that you aren’t doing what you are reading about but would love God to give you a “want to.”
- These are just a few suggested examples of how we interact and there are assuredly many more!

The point is, it is not just that you are reading the Bible but “how” you are *interacting* with the Author and “that” you are interacting while you are reading. He doesn’t want us to “just read” and gather information and go perform it. He wants us to realize that He wants to be involved in the process with you as you are reading. He wants us to talk with Him while He is talking to us through His Word. We know how to do this because we naturally do it all the time with friends. And He wants us to do that with Him, our Companion and Friend. God doesn’t make something so important to Him, complicated. He wants us to realize that “we” cannot do one thing written in His Word alone, because “apart from Him, we can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5). But He wants us to realize that “we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us” (Philip. 4:13). He is just waiting for us to ask--and ask as we are reading-- not just when we are finished reading. Interact with Him as you would a friend over coffee. He doesn’t want to be treated like a business interaction or a mere acquaintance. Let’s face it--there is no other book in the whole world that you can interact with the Author while you are reading. This is called Reading Relationally. But you can do that with the Bible because it is the Living Word! I

believe that God is merciful, but I believe He feels just like the person in my story who poured their heart out to their friend and then received no response or interaction during the course of their hour together. Let's delight and bring abundant pleasure to the Lover of our souls and talk with Him throughout the pages of His Word as we journey with Him each morning in His love letter to us! Let's not just talk about God, but let's talk to Him as we are reading! Hang on for the ride of your life because He has treasures He wants to share from His heart to yours when you interact with Him! Try it...you will see! My Bible is full of me writing down God's responses to my questions and amazing insights that only He can give. As you experience relationship with God, nobody will have to "tell" you to talk about God and His words...you will be looking for an audience automatically out of the overflow of your relationship with God. Not only are you blessed but so are many others! Your genuine enthusiasm is contagious and makes people hungry to go and hear from God like that themselves! Now I must say, it doesn't get any better than that!

So here is an example of Reading Relationally from Psalm 84. Keep in mind when you are in a conversation with someone as you are listening you don't comment on every sentence they utter. In the same way as you are reading God's word relationally, you don't comment on every line you read, but when you have a question, comment etc., that's when you engage. Our conversation (sometimes silent or audible) is in caps below:

Psalm 84: 1-12

¹ How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty. **(LORD, WHAT IS YOUR DWELLING PLACE LIKE ANYWAY? ("MY CHILD, YOU ARE MY DWELLING PLACE, KEEP IT CLEAN AND KEEP IT LOVELY"))** ² I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the LORD. With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God. **(LORD, I SO WANT TO WORSHIP YOU CONSTANTLY THIS WAY. I NOTICE THAT WHEN I AM IN A CRISIS THAT I AM MUCH QUICKER TO CLING TO YOU AND POUR OUT TO YOU WITH MY WHOLE BEING, BODY AND SOUL. AND AS MUCH AS I DON'T WANT TO ADMIT IT I REALLY DO THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING DIFFICULTIES IN MY LIFE AND CARING ENOUGH TO TRAIN ME BY ALLOWING CHALLENGING THINGS. PLEASE HELP ME TO REMEMBER THERE IS PURPOSE TO MY PAIN AS A PART OF THE WORK OF YOUR KINGDOM. (MY CHILD, AS I TEACH THIS TRUTH TO OTHERS THROUGH YOU, LISTEN, FOR IT IS A REMINDER TO YOU TOO.)** ³ Even the sparrow finds a home there, and the swallow builds her nest and raises her young— at a place near Your altar, O Lord Almighty, my King and my God! ⁴ How happy are those who can live in Your house, always singing Your praises. ⁵ Happy are those who are strong in the LORD, who set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. ⁶ When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs, where pools of blessing collect after the rains! **(OH LORD, ONLY YOU CAN TURN WEeping INTO REFRESING SPRINGS! AND IF THAT WEREN'T ENOUGH YOU BLESS US, NOT WITH "PUDDLES", BUT WITH "POOLS" OF BLESSINGS! WOW LORD, THANKS FOR THAT AMAZING INSIGHT YOU JUST GAVE ME, WHAT A WONDERFUL PICTURE! YOU ARE AWESOME! WHAT KIND OF GOD ARE YOU THAT CAN LOVE LIKE THIS?! I THANK YOU FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF KNOWING YOU AND BEING TRAINED BY YOU. MY CHILD, MAY YOU SENSE MY PLEASURE OVER YOUR LOVE FOR ME. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME THAT YOU KNOW THAT)** ⁷ They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem. ⁸ O LORD God Almighty, hear my prayer. Listen, O God of Israel. ⁹ O God, look with favor upon the king, our protector! Have mercy on the one you have anointed. ¹⁰ A single day in Your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else! **(OH LORD MAY I LEARN TO BECOME MORE AND MORE INTIMATE WITH YOU THAT THIS IS THE CONTINUAL CRY OF MY HEART. LORD, WHAT ARE YOUR COURTS REALLY LIKE? MY CHILD, I LOVE THAT YOU ARE ASKING. KEEP READING THE PSALMS AND I WILL REVEAL THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION).** I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked. ¹¹ For the LORD God is our light and protector. He gives us grace and glory. No good thing will the LORD withhold from those who do what is right. ¹² O LORD Almighty, happy are those who trust in You. **(FATHER, I KNOW THAT I AM NOT TRUSTING IN YOU RIGHT NOW OVER THE DECISIONS THAT I HAVE TO MAKE WHICH IS WHY I AM NOT CONTENT AND HAPPY. BUT RIGHT NOW I AM ASKING YOU TO GIVE ME A "WANT TO", TO TRUST YOU IN EVERY ASPECT OF THIS DECISION. I AM CHOOSING RIGHT NOW TO TRUST YOU AND TO STOP TRYING TO FIGURE THINGS OUT MYSELF. I SO DESIRE TO KEEP YOUR DWELLING PLACE CLEAN, SURRENDERED AND LOVELY! I LOVE YOU AND THANK YOU FOR BEING SO REAL AND SPEAKING TO ME TODAY! (AND MY CHILD, I LOVE THAT YOU ARE REAL WITH ME)**

Daily With the King by W. Glyn Evans

Lord, am I a Christian by indoctrination or revelation? If I am merely parroting truths that have been dictated to me, woe is me and woe is any person or group that listens to me. When Christ met Paul on the Damascus road, He revealed Himself to His former enemy. Afterward Paul did not confer with flesh and blood but escaped into the desert to receive further revelation (Galatians 1:15-17). Later, when he emerged to preach Christ, it was an incarnational message he preached, not one learned at the foot of a teacher.

All divine knowledge is received inwardly. Christian education has its place, but only to make Christ's revelation to me possible. It cannot make that revelation actual. Too many Christians are around today who have taken on the culture of Christ without taking in His person. What is worse, too many spokesmen for Christ in the world are like the disciples before Pentecost - surrounded by Christ but not invaded by Him. After Pentecost the disciples did not need to be taught; they only needed opportunity to release what had been revealed.

What had formerly been meaningless words now became truths that seared their hearts. If Jesus did not dare to speak from Himself (John 7:17), how dare I? If Jesus spoke only what was revealed to Him by the Father (John 7:16), how can we possibly preach anything unless it is revealed to us? What we need in our pulpits and in the body of Christ are followers of Christ who talk about God based on firsthand knowledge. God revealers will never lack an audience. I will do what Habakkuk did: "Station myself on the (watch) tower, and watch to see what He will say to me" (Habakkuk 2:1). It is what God says to me that becomes the message people longingly desire. *"Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I have put My words in your mouth' "* Jer 1:9

Eating and Drinking with God

One of the sure signs that a disciple is reaching a mature relationship with God is in the matter of *relaxation*. "They saw God, and did eat and drink" (Exodus 24:11). People who claim that God must always be approached with holy fear do not really know God. If I am awkward in the presence of God, I do not know Him too well. He wants me to become familiar enough with Him to "eat and drink" in His presence. He wants to call me His "friend" as He called Abraham, Moses, and the twelve disciples. Familiarity is not a sign of flippancy, nor does it always breed contempt. Does God say of me as He said of Abraham, "I know Him" (Genesis 18:19)? God knows everyone, but does He know me as an intimate friend in whom He confides? Jesus elevated His disciples from "servants" to "friends" (John 15:15). To be a servant of Jesus is a high calling indeed; but to be a friend means to be in on His plans, thoughts, feelings, and purposes. How amazing that many Christians never know at a given moment how Jesus feels. They know His general purposes from the Word, but they do not know His heart and mind concerning a particular situation. Elisha knew when God was going to take his leader, Elijah, from him into heaven (2 Kings 2:3), because he was more than a servant; Elisha was a friend of God.

To be relaxed in God's presence means that there is no fence between us. Trust and love have replaced fear and timidity. Awe has given way to acceptance. It is no light matter to have arrived here, and God is very careful about whom He admits to this intimacy. May God count me worthy! What an honor to be "comfortable with God! *"Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever"* (Psalm 73:25-26)

Read... Psalm 86:1-17... Relationally

¹ Bend down, O LORD, and hear my prayer; answer me, for I need your help. ² Protect me, for I am devoted to you. Save me, for I serve you and trust you. You are my God. ³ Be merciful, O Lord, for I am calling on you constantly. ⁴ Give me happiness, O Lord, or my life depends on you.

⁵ O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask your aid. ⁶ Listen closely to my prayer, O LORD; hear my urgent cry. ⁷ I will call to you whenever trouble strikes, and you will answer me. ⁸ Nowhere among the pagan gods is there a god like you, O Lord. There are no other miracles like yours. ⁹ All the nations—and you made each one—will come and bow before you, Lord; they will praise your great and holy name. ¹⁰ For you are great and perform great miracles. You alone are God. ¹¹ Teach me your ways, O LORD, that I may live according to your truth! Grant me purity of heart, that I may honor you.

¹² With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give glory to your name forever,

¹³ for your love for me is very great. You have rescued me from the depths of death!

¹⁴ O God, insolent people rise up against me; violent people are trying to kill me. And you mean nothing to them.

¹⁵ But you, O Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, slow to get angry, full of unfailing love and truth.

¹⁶ Look down and have mercy on me. Give strength to your servant; yes, save me, for I am your servant.

¹⁷ Send me a sign of your favor. Then those who hate me will be put to shame, for you, O LORD, help and comfort me

Read Psalm 103..... Relationally A psalm of David.

¹ Praise the LORD, I tell myself; with my whole heart, I will praise His holy name. ² Praise the LORD, I tell myself, and never forget the good things He does for me. ³ He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. ⁴ He ransoms me from death and surrounds me with love and tender mercies. ⁵ He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's! ⁶ The LORD gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly. ⁷ He revealed His character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel. ⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious; He is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love. ⁹ He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever.

¹⁰ He has not punished us for all our sins, nor does he deal with us as we deserve. ¹¹ For his unfailing love toward those who fear Him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. ¹² He has removed our rebellious acts as far away from us as the east is from the west. ¹³ The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear Him. ¹⁴ For He understands how weak we are; He knows we are only dust. ¹⁵ Our days on earth are like grass; like wildflowers, we bloom and die. ¹⁶ The wind blows, and we are gone— as though we had never been here. ¹⁷ But the love of the LORD remains forever with those who fear Him. His salvation extends to the children's children ¹⁸ of those who are faithful to His covenant, of those who obey His commandments!

¹⁹ The LORD has made the heavens his throne; from there He rules over everything. ²⁰ Praise the LORD, you angels of His, you mighty creatures who carry out his plans, listening for each of His commands. ²¹ Yes, praise the LORD, you armies of angels who serve him and do His will! ²² Praise the LORD, everything he has created, everywhere in his kingdom. As for me—I, too, will praise the LORD.