

## 2021-02-24 ... Midweek Reflection on Facebook ... Mrs Jane Rylands

A few weeks ago a friend asked me what I thought was the best way to read the Bible. When I thought about it I realised that I only really found a way that worked for me when I started preaching so I thought I would share my response to her with you.

If you pick up your Bible each day with excitement, then I am glad for you and you probably don't need to go on listening. If you have the discipline to read a chunk each day and have read the Bible through several times, or even once, then you are out of my league and I salute you.

I don't find the Bible that easy to read. There are some good stories in it of course and some bits are in an easily digestible style but often it's quite dense, the information it gives is given in a very compact way – the stories are short and you don't get much satisfaction from reading them one on top of the other, or the detail of what it is telling us about God is difficult to unravel.

So I have three points which help me and which I hope will help you.

1. The first is: ***you have to actually pick up the Bible, open it and read something.***
2. The second is : ***read it SLOWLY***
3. And the third is: ***always remember that God is LOVE.***

**So you have to start somewhere.** When I'm reading to prepare for a sermon my starting point is the readings set for that particular day. I think that could be a good place to start for anyone. They are seasonally appropriate, there is usually an interesting link between the different readings, if you have a copy of a St Alkmund's pew sheet they're written out for you and if you were able to sustain a regular practice you would get through a good part of the Bible in the three year cycle that churches use.

**Another thing that will help is if you read from a translation of the Bible that you like.**

**The SLOW reading** is really the crux of what helps me. I take a passage of maybe 10 verses. And I read it. **Aloud probably**, because that means I can't skip any words and it keeps my focus on the job of reading. **And that's it on Day 1.**

**Then the next day I read it again**, perhaps in a different translation. **There's an excellent website called Bible Gateway** and at the press of a button you can have the passage in just about any translation, traditional or modern that you like. Having the two translations is like hearing two slightly different viewpoints and the details are beginning to stick in my mind and I'm beginning to have my own thoughts about the passage.

**The next day** I might read the bit before it to see where it sits in the bigger picture. Now I'm beginning to find that things happening in life, people I meet, things I hear on the news are linking up with what I've been reading about.

**The next day** ... you see what I mean about slowly?! .... I will look at a study bible or commentary and see what someone else can tell me about the passage, see what question they might pose about it. By now, I might really be getting into it and looking forward to engaging with the passage and what it's telling me about God because my understanding is much greater than when I began.

**And my last point was that you must remember God is love** ... and that those who wrote the books of the bible were doing so as a way of spreading that message of love. This doesn't always feel so obvious when you're reading.

Keep exploring the passage looking for that message because then you in your turn can take it out into the world in love.

Glory to God in the Highest!