

Engaging with the Bible as a couple

We are going to start with a disclaimer.... We definitely are not experts on reading the bible as a couple and if you were expecting to come here and leave with a step by step guide on exactly how to do it, sorry but you may be a little disappointed! One thing we can say is that from experience reading the bible as a couple is not that easy, life is busy! But it is so rewarding, It brings life. It increases your spiritual intimacy as you are both putting Christ at the centre of your relationship and of your lives, it fosters a feeling of togetherness and overall we believe it can help strengthen our marriages.

Deuteronomy 6 says;

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.

Our relationship with God's word directly impacts those closest to us and we know that children are far more likely to do what they see us doing, so reading the bible as a couple will not only improve our relationships with God and our husband or wife but hopefully it will encourage our children in their walk with him too.

The way in which you interact with the bible as a couple will most likely look different in different seasons of life and thats expected. (read scripture together or separate). No matter how you do it, we think you should always try and use it as a foundation for praying together. This allows you to not only see what God is saying through scripture but allows you to listen to him together and discern what impact this has on your family.

If looking at the bible as a couple is something you want to start doing, we suggest that you begin by praying about it individually. Ask God to help you find a good time to do it and give you the discipline and commitment to see it through, and to prepare the heart of your spouse.

Here's a few suggestions on how you could engage with scripture together;

- Maybe start by picking a really short book of the bible to read through and discuss, maybe using a commentary along side
- you could follow the same bible plan - if you haven't discovered it already YouVersion have a great bible app with plans on, you could use a specific couples devotional bible or plan on marriage
- Discuss what's jumped out at you from the passage you read, quite often we find that we've made completely different observations, which is ok!

- One suggestion we read was to get a diary with some space for each day, each write a verse from the passage you read, or just something that spoke to you. Then you'll have something to look back on and remind you of those moments, and perhaps encourage you when you're finding it hard to read the bible as a couple.
- At the minute we are following the YOBL daily readings, reading them separately but coming together in the evenings to discuss and pray about it.
- Remember we were all made differently and therefore we may need to work to find a rhythm that works for both of us. Some of us may not like reading out loud, or may find it difficult to process what is being read when we are just listening, some of us may need time to process what we have read before discussing it, some may need to write things down. We want to encourage our spouse to engage with scripture as fully as possible in order to facilitate their spiritual growth so be mindful of how they best engage and try to make that happen.
- Find a time that works for both of you - there may need to be some compromise. Stick it in the calendar and prioritise it. At the same time, there's a need to be flexible and adaptable - if you were planning to do it when the kids were in bed and they aren't quite working to your schedule, have grace and wait till a little later to sit down together.
- Be creative, if one of you works away, maybe do it over facetime - I know of couples in St Giles who have done this and its really helped them find intimacy whilst being 100's of miles apart.
- Start small, if reading the bible together is something new, or something you haven't done for a while, then just aim to complete a short plan, something thats a few days long. If you're joining in with the YOBL plan, then perhaps make a plan of how you want to engage with scripture together for one week. Commit to it and then at the end give yourselves a chance to review how it went - be honest and if you feel like you need to, make changes. Block out a small length of time in the beginning, something that feels achievable for you as a couple -15 minutes or so.
- Be aware of the attitude you go into reading and studying the bible with. Remember the aim is for both of you to grow spiritually; to grow in your relationship with God and each other. This time needs to be encouraging not a constant stream of critique. You also want to be learning together - do not get into the pattern of one being the teacher and the other pupil - we are equals.
- In marriage we are accountable to each other - we must help one another in our journeys of faith. Help your spouse to read their bible, encourage them when they have, support them when they haven't - provide time, childcare etc.

Reading the bible as a couple isn't just something that needs to be kept for a 'quiet time'. Going back to that verse in Deuteronomy 6 we want engaging with scripture to be part of our lifestyle. We know some people that read a psalm before dinner or bed, there's the talks this afternoon on reading the bible with our children, I remember going round to someone's house and there were post its all around with different bible verses on, encouraging the family as they went about their daily activities.

Be creative - find different ways to be able to engage with scripture together...
use your skills and personalities to guide and shape your time in God's word.

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