

Where do you read the Bible?

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This is a question that would have seemed weird to me not too long ago. However, now I see it as one loaded with (potential) theological significance. I have been told since my teenage years about the virtues of daily Bible reading. To encourage this habit, I have also been encouraged to do this reading/reflection at the same time and in the same place to help reinforce the habit. For various reasons this is a good and practical suggestion.

Of course, anyone who has embarked on regularly scheduled spiritual practices can attest to the fact that they can often become rote, boring, and stale. Something I never considered as a contributing factor to this phenomenon was the staleness of reading location this suggestion breeds.

One of my favorite blog “mini-series” going right now is [Richard Beck](#)’s reflections on biblical passages he teaches in a prison. In these posts he highlights the ways that reading scripture in a prison, and with prisoners, has opened his eyes to new ways of understanding scripture. (For example, [check out this post](#). Seriously, [read it](#) .) I’ve written before about how [reading Jesus’s story of the rich man and Lazarus in a Nairobi slum forever transformed the way I read that passage](#). Well, I’ve finally connected the dots and would like to recommend to you an idea to revitalize your devotional life and open your eyes to fresh readings of scripture: read the Bible in new, and uncomfortable, places.

It’s really that simple. Pick up your Bible. Go somewhere you don’t normally associate with reading scripture. Sit down. And read. Read the Bible in the midst of new sights, sounds, smells, and people. Read it in quiet places and read it in the hustle and bustle of the city. Read it on the bus or subway. Read it in a park. Read it outside of a Tiffany’s jewelry store. Read it on a street corner. Read it in a nursing home. Read it in a garden. Go somewhere new and read the scriptures anew.

This insight, if you’re like me, is not something totally unfamiliar. Many of us know the power of reading the creation story or the psalms when in the middle of nature’s

beauty. Those who have been on mission trips know that being in an unfamiliar culture can open one's eyes up to fresh readings of scripture. We know this, but we don't often intentionally practice it. At least not in our day-to-day lives.

What finally made this insight click for me was [teaching this preaching course](#). My co-teacher, who learned this trick from [Anna Carter Florence](#), mentioned how he has had students in his preaching courses do this in preparation for a sermon and that it has often had remarkable results. He literally has them go catch public transportation or sit in Buckhead (Atlanta's most posh neighborhood) and read the scripture they will preach on (often out loud) and see what insights they gain by the simple act of physically relocating.

It really is amazing how much such a simple thing, moving into a new or uncomfortable space, allows God to open our eyes to new and uncomfortable insights from scripture. So, go ahead and give it a try. You might never want to read scripture in the same place again.

*Originally posted at [James McCarty's blog](#)*