

TOOL: Introduction to Scripture Before Screens

Scripture before screen • Daily



One of the most important and potent forces in our lives are our habits. What makes habits even more powerful is that we often do not even know we have the habit. Our lives are filled with habits - often unconsciously driving our decisions, actions, and lifestyles.

One of the habits we might not recognize is how we begin our day. Take a moment to consider how you start your day? Is your phone on your nightstand waking you up? Do you (out of habit) silence the alarm and immediately check the news, social media feed, text, or emails? And as your mind and body become awake and alert, you are beginning your day from the priorities found in your email's inbox.

It's hard for me to imagine a worse way to begin a day than with anger at the latest episode in political battles, feeling left out about what party I missed last night, or trying to jump on the productivity treadmill - all before my feet hit the ground. What if we begin our days differently?

We live in a world that has a clear commodity: our attention. Our days are formed and informed by what we give our attention to, and this is very much the case for our mornings. What we set our gaze upon in the beginning of the day will instruct our souls for the rest of the day. What if we began our day with our attention on God's Word - God's message to us? As Justin Earley wrote, "Refusing to check the phone until after reading a passage of scripture is a way of replacing the question 'What do I need to do today?' with a better one, 'Who am I and who am I becoming?'" Daily immersion in the scriptures resists the anxiety of emails, the anger of news, and the envy of social media. Instead, it forms us daily in our true identity as children of the King, dearly loved.

Practicals of scripture before screen

A concern with seeking to form any habit is that it becomes just another empty religious rule that isn't life-giving. Another concern is that we will immediately judge

our experience and quickly expect the fruits of an experiment to come quickly. Habits take time and repetition. It will begin clunky and often be frustrating. That is okay. Give yourself (and the practice) a ton of grace.

Here are some recommendations for you as you begin to explore this habit.

1. Set aside the time. For many of us, sleep is precious, and we try to get the most of it that we can. So, if we seek to add something to our morning routine, it will take sacrifice – the sacrifice of setting the alarm and potentially an earlier bedtime. If you are nervous about this, set aside just 10 extra minutes in the morning. If you find as you go that 10 minutes is not enough, extend it further. If mornings are not a possibility due to stage of life, set aside another window of time; whether it is a baby’s nap time or lunchtime at work.

2. Kick the phone out of bed. Oftentimes, to create a habit, we have to disrupt current habits. Many of us prolong going to sleep by mindlessly scrolling in bed. Furthermore, many of us also begin our days mindlessly scrolling in bed. Kick the phone out of the bed and let your bed and your bedroom be a place of rest and calm.

3. Consider using a hard copy of the Bible. Many of us are addicted to our phones. You don’t give an addict the source of their addiction and ask them to avoid old habits. I have found when I use my phone for reading scripture, I am less patient and calm. I treat Scripture like I would any other newsfeed. Consider using an actual Bible for your morning routine. If you are doing a devotional via email or an app, that is fine. Just be mindful of how you can slip into old habits and mindsets.

4. Explore the tool box. We have created an entire tool box for you to explore and use to engage with Scripture on a daily basis. I would encourage you to select one of these practices, grab a couple friends, and see how beginning the day makes all the difference in the world.

Pause and consider

- What stood out to you from this resource?
- What is your typical morning routine and how does it make you feel?
- If you were to explain your previous relationship with the Bible, how would you explain it?
- Have you had a season of study that was meaningful or impactful? Share what were the elements in that season that made it special.
- What would you hope to experience in meeting with God in scripture as a means to begin your day?

Suggested resources for daily scripture meditation

Books

The Blue Book by Jim Branch

A year-long devotional guide designed to offer space and structure, scripture and prayers, as well as readings and reflections for your daily time with God.

My First 30 Quiet Times by Ty Saltzgeber

A great resource for someone new to the faith or new to reading the Bible.

Moments with the Savior by Ken Gire

With a gift for painting the picture of a life with Jesus, Gire shares devotionals from moments in the Gospels.

Awaken by Priscilla Shirer

A book of 90 devotions to *Awaken* you each day with fresh insights gleaned from the Spirit of God.

New Morning Mercies: A Daily

Gospel Devotional by Paul David Tripp

A devotional with 365 "Gospel-centered" devotionals meant for anyone.

Apps and online resources

YouVersion: One of the most extensive catalogs of devotional material and daily reading plans. They also have an app for your phone. One of the greatest aspects is that you can invite friends to study together and journal together.

BibleGateway: This site has a set of devotionals as well as reading plans.

Proverbs 31 Ministries: A ministry led by women for women. One of their ministries is a daily devotional.

Pray As You Go: Both this app and website will guide you through an abbreviated scripture reading, reflection, and prayer experience.

Audio Lenten Devotional!: The Vine created a 47-day audio devotional for our Lenten experience in 2018, but you can use it year around.

What's next?

Dive into the tools provided!

For each practice, you'll find a series of tools to help you explore and go deeper. Each tool will unpack a specific method or practical way to engage with that habit.

Within each tool you'll find three sections: (1) an introduction to the tool, (2) instructions on how to practice utilizing the tool, (3) a few questions to debrief your experience with your Praxis Group.

We encourage you to practice using a tool for at least one week before you debrief your experience. Remember, practicing isn't the same as accomplishing or perfecting! Practicing can be messy, imperfect, and a learning experience!