

Slow Reading

by Scott McKnight May 3, 2024

By Mike Glenn

Cal Newport has been turning the business world on its head by his insistence we actually get more done by doing less. In his books, *Deep Work* and *Slow Productivity*, Newport challenges our modern mythology that all of us should be working on 3 or 4 projects at the same time. We think our modern world demands we be answering email, texting, and working on a Zoom call all at the same time. In reality, he points out, all of us are busy to the point of burn out, but we're not getting anything important done.

The results of our multi-tasking demands have been disastrous. Not only are people getting burned out, we're doing lousy work. Newport has found that by setting aside several hours a day to focus deeply on one project at a time, we do better work and actually accomplish more over the long haul. His new work/life philosophy has taken the business community by storm. Human beings were never meant to work at the speed of light.

Since my transition out of my role as senior pastor, my life has slowed down. What I've found out is I never should have been living that fast in the first place. I didn't know how tired I was. I had normalized the stress load and thought everyone felt like me. I thought this constant churning in my gut was my natural drive to get things done.

Nope. It was the sad consequence of bowing to the god of productivity.

I like my life better now. It should have been like this all along. What has changed you ask. For one thing, I've rediscovered my love for the Scriptures. When I first started my ministry, one of my favorite things to do was to study the Word. I loved

lingering over passages seeing how the words worked in each passage, how illustrations tied back to previous stories and events. I loved seeing how the writers would stack meaning on top of meaning.

I read the Bible slowly. I was always amazed and slightly puzzled by my friends who made a habit of reading the Bible through every year. I could never read that fast. Sometimes, it would take a month or longer for me to get through one of Paul's letters. Now, I'm under no pressure to get the passage read. I can take as long as I want. Since I don't have the pressure of preaching every Sunday, I don't have the need to "get something" out of the text. I'm not trying to do anything to or with the text. I can just let the text be what the text wants to be.

One of the differences between Eastern meditation and Biblical meditation is in Eastern meditation, the goal is to empty our minds. In Biblical meditation, the goal is to fill our minds with the words and presence of Christ. So much so that His thoughts become our thoughts, His desires become our desires. This does happen overnight. The word for meditation in the Bible implies a slow chewing, the way we chew when we're eating a great meal and just filled our mouths with just the right blend of every flavor on the table. We don't swallow that. We hold onto it, swirling it around in our mouths and squeezing every drop of flavor out of it.

That's how we should read the Bible, slowly, squeezing every morsel of truth out of the text.

So, let's get started. This could be the most important thing we do today -- start. Everybody knows we need to spend more time in the Bible so, let's get out our calendars and make an appointment with ourselves to read and study our Bibles.

Then, the second point is to show up. Once we've made the appointment, keep it as you would any other.

Now, let's read our Bible. There are Bible reading plans by the thousands. Pick one. Or, just start reading. We can't go wrong no matter which method we use. It's God's Word from cover to cover.

Now, read slowly. Read until something makes you go, "Hmmm." Then, get out your journal and start writing. Who was in the story? What was the point? How did the original audience react? What was the writer's point? What do I need to do with this passage? Write until you're done.

Then, grab hold of one truth you learned and live it out in the coming day. The truth of God is verified in our lives when we live out His teachings. A soft answer really does turn away wrath. I've seen it happen. I've even done it myself once or twice.

Now, repeat these same steps tomorrow for the rest of your life. Being with God never gets old. He's promised to show up if we do. Don't miss a moment. Take your time. Read slowly. Savor the Word and the Author who wrote it.