

# LARGE PORTIONS ALOUD

By Gavin Bennett

There are many ways to read the Bible. Some of us wake early in the morning and, before doing anything else, sit down with our Bibles and read. Others of us listen to it through an app while we ride the bus to work. We read it with our kids before going to bed, or in the park on our favorite bench. We sing or chant small chunk in liturgical readings with our roommates, or in songs while we drive. However we may read the Bible, one practice that many of us don't often consider, but was fundamental to followers of Jesus for centuries, was reading large portions of the Bible out loud in one sitting.

Before the printing press and Bible apps, the people of God would crowd together in a room with a single copy (or usually just parts) of the Scriptures, and one person would read aloud whole books or large chunks from it as everyone listened intently. In fact, there are places in the world today in which followers of Jesus still do this by necessity. Whether because the Bible is considered illegal propaganda, the community does not have enough money to purchase Bibles for everyone, or the Bible hasn't actually been fully translated into their language, our brothers and sisters still crowd together in a room to listen to large portions of the Scriptures be read out loud.

This week, we want to practice this age old tradition of reading a large portion of Scriptures aloud in one sitting. As we do this, if you are not the one reading, let the Scriptures be read over you and keep in mind that *posture* is more important than *technique*. Pay attention your posture, and if you are able, take note of what happens as you listen to the Scriptures in a posture of *surrender*, opening yourself to God's voice and letting the words you hear challenge, shape, and bless you.

## **DO THIS PRACTICE AS A COMMUNITY (15–20 MINUTES)**

There are many parts of the Bible that come to life in new ways when we read them out loud together and in one sitting, so we want to do just that. Spend a few moments reading through the following steps in order to make the necessary decisions and familiarize yourself with the process before doing the Practice. Once you've made the necessary decisions (which passage, who reads, who's praying, etc), do the Practice together as a Community.

**Get Comfortable** – You'll be reading for the next 20 or so minutes, so make sure that you're in a place, position, and posture to be still, attentive, and open to God.

**Pick a Passage** – There are so many passages and books of the Bible with which to try this, so if you don't already have one in mind, below you will find a list of passages and books that would be a great place to start. Pick one of them to spend time reading out loud as a Community.

- Ruth
- Psalm 119
- Matthew 5 – 7
- John 18 – 21
- Galatians
- Philippians
- James
- 1 John, 2 John, & 3 John

**Establish The Reader(s)** – Decide who will read it. One person can read the whole thing, a few of you can split it, or (what we would recommend) each person can read some of it until the whole passage is read. Spend a moment to decide how you will break up the text and who will read.

**Invite the Holy Spirit** – Take a deep breath and settle in. Have one person invite the Holy Spirit to help you all to listen in a posture of surrender and to form you by what is read.

**Read** – Spend time to read the entire text in one sitting aloud together.

**Silence & Prayer** – After the last verse is read, don't rush onto the next part. Take a moment in silence and stillness, letting the words reverberate inside your mind and soul. After a bit, have someone pray to thank God for the experience of this Practice.

### **DISCUSS THE COMING WEEK'S PRACTICE (1 MINUTE)**

The Practice for the week ahead is pretty simple. Pick a day, such as your Sabbath, and set aside 20 minutes or so to do the exact same thing we just did. You can do this on your own or with someone else (e.g. a friend, spouse, family, roommate, co-worker, etc.). You can read at the park on your lunch break or on your couch with a cup of tea. You could read in between classes with some friends or with the men/women from your Community over brunch on Saturday. Feel free to use the same passage as the

one you read tonight, pick another from the list, or choose another passage or book of the Bible entirely. And take some time when you're done to process how the experience was for you.

**WORK THROUGH THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU CALL IT A NIGHT (5–10 MINUTES)**

1. How was your experience reading in this way (i.e. a large portion out loud together in one sitting) different for you from when you read your Bible by yourself?
2. As you consider the Practice for the week ahead, what ideas come to mind about your setting, the passage, by yourself or with a group, etc., that you want to try?
3. Any creative ideas or suggestions about this Practice?

**CLOSE IN PRAYER (5 MINUTES)**