

Informational vs. Formational Reading

“The challenge – never negligible – regarding the Christian Scriptures is getting them read, but read on their own terms, as God’s revelation. . . . What is neglected is reading the Scriptures formatively, reading in order to live.” Eugene Peterson, Eat This Book

“We do not always realize what a radical suggestion it is for us to read to be formed and transformed rather than to gather information. We are information seekers. We love to cover territory. . . . Read with a vulnerable heart. Expect to be blessed in the reading. Read as one awake, one waiting for the Beloved. Read with reverence.” Macrina Wiederkehr

Informational Reading:

- We read the text with our own agenda already in place, knowing in advance what we expect to receive, what problems we want the text to solve for us.
- We read the text analytically, viewing it as an object over which we exercise control.
- We read the text as rapidly as possible, to amass as much information in as little time as possible.
- The goal is our mastery of the text for the fulfillment of our purposes.

Formational Reading:

- The text becomes a means of grace through which we encounter God who has spoken us forth into being and who continues *to speak to us to shape us into the image of Christ*. Instead of coming to the text with our agenda, we come in a posture of openness to God’s agenda.
- We take a contemplative posture that is open to ambiguity and mystery.
- We read attentively, seeking not to cover as much as possible as quickly as possible, but to plumb the depths of the text so that the text may plumb the depths of our being and doing.
- The goal is to be mastered by God for the fulfillment of God’s purposes in us and through us.

(Partially adapted from Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word*)