

A Solution for Those Who Feel Guilty About Not Reading the Bible

Put me in a secluded corner with a book, and I'm happy. But not everyone shares that joy. While 86 percent of adults can read, most don't do so voluntarily. We'll read a news story, an occasional magazine article, or the menu at Waffle House, but it's more infrequent for us to pick up a book ... just because. In fact, 27 percent of Americans didn't read a single book in 2015.

We assume people who read books are smarter. That's a false assumption. It turns out my twin sister is far smarter than me (and better looking)—but I did better in school. Why? I like to read, and the education system caters to those of us with a highly verbal orientation.

But reading is not the only way to learn! Howard Gardner was a pioneer in "multiple intelligences," identifying the eight ways we like to learn and show our intelligence. So, if reading a book is right up there with flossing a cat on your to-do list, you're OK. There are other ways to learn.

But what about reading the Bible? I'm always being told that, if I want to grow as a Christian, I need to read the Bible. Every day.

Nowhere in Scripture are we told to read the Bible.

That's true. We find references to the *public* reading of Scripture (Neh. 8:2-3; 1 Tim. 4:13; Rev. 1:3), but not a single exhortation for us to individually pick up a scroll and read. Instead, what we see in the Bible are an abundance of references to *hearing* God's Word. All these "hearing" passages carry relevance for us today who have our own copies of the Bible and can read them in private. But in biblical times, the scrolls and parchments were public documents, so hearing the word was the only option for most.

I value reading—and I especially value reading God's Word—but your walk with Christ need not be hindered if you don't like to read.

You can listen to it.

Hearing is no less informative or inspiring than reading. How many of us would rather have someone explain how to cut a dovetail joint than read a manual? OK, so maybe that's just me, but you get the point. We learn just as well—and sometimes better—when we hear it.

Audiobooks are rising in popularity. Book sales remain flat, but audio book sales grow by 20 percent each year. What better book to listen to than God's Word? The YouVersion Bible app includes multiple translations you can read, and many of them have an audio option.

Even if you don't mind reading, listening to the Scripture is an excellent way to let God speak to you. For the past six years or so, my afternoon commute has consisted of truck fumes and listening to an audio Bible.

Lose the guilt about not reading. Start listening—and let God speak.

- *"But the one sown on the good ground — this is one who hears and understands the word, who does produce fruit and yields: some a hundred, some sixty, some thirty times what was sown" (Matt. 13:23).*
- *"Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28).*
- *"Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7).*

In Scripture, the word "hearing" is more than just listening to words. It means to hear and obey.