

## 10 Tips to Sanctuary Success

Turning your home into a sanctuary where the Bible is a daily habit is no easy task. Busyness, confusion, guilt, and a hundred other enemies make the Bible a difficult book to open. So, check out the ten tips below. We pray they help you overcome the obstacles and enjoy hearing the voice of God in your home each day.

### 10—Start with “Why?”

Before you figure out when or where or how to read the Bible, you need to ask “Why am I reading the Bible?” Often, people approach the Bible as a duty, as something they have to do to avoid feeling guilty. But guilt only motivates for a moment. Instead, see the Bible as God’s gracious invitation to speak to you, guide you, empower you, forgive you, and equip you for your week. The Bible is the fuel you need for the race you will run this week. The Bible is the cord that connects you to your spiritual power source (God). The Bible is not a way to impress God with your faithfulness; it’s God’s way to impress you with his faithfulness. Start with “Why?” and you’ll remember why the Word is worthy of every minute that you give it.

### 9—Know Thyself

Most successful habits rely on routine. So, what routine will bring the Bible into your home? Will you read it first thing in the morning? During your lunch break? Right after dinner? Just before bed? We are all wired differently, so it is wise to find a time that works for you. When is your brain fresh? When can you best focus on the Word? When do you face the fewest amount of distractions? Pick a time and write it into your calendar (and share your plan with others) as an appointment to meet with God.

### 8—Protect This House!

Your spiritual enemies will try anything to make you break that appointment with God. An extra episode of television/Netflix before bed. A couple clicks of the snooze bar in the morning. A few extra emails that you just “have to” send during lunch. But, as Jesus told a busy woman named Martha, there is only “one thing needful” that is, the promises of God (Luke 10:38-42). Therefore, voraciously protect your time with God. If a conflict is unavoidable, move your devotional time earlier, never later. “I’ll get to it later” is slang for “I won’t get to it at all.”

### 7—Prayer Before Pages

It is terrifyingly easy to “meet with God” without thinking at all about God. What God intended to be a relationship can quickly turn into a ritual. Therefore, it is wise to pray before opening the pages of your Bible. Consider this prayer—“Lord, I need your help. I will face a thousand temptations this week and I am too weak to face them alone. So, speak to me today. Teach me. Warn me. Forgive me. Equip me. When I close this book, I want to be closer to you. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.”

### 6—Expectations are Everything

The reason the Bible gets better the more you read it is because it is like the ocean—There are beautiful truths in the “deep waters” of Scripture as well as thrilling promises in the “shallow waters” of the simplest passages. However, when you begin to read the Bible, you will come across shallow waters and deep waters in the very same devotion, and often find yourself in over your head. That is okay. In fact, when you start to read the

Bible, there is no way to avoid it. Expect to be confused. Write down your questions and keep moving. You are laying a foundation for years of joyful, exhilarating conversations with God.

### 5—Use the WeVersion

“How can I understand [the Bible] unless someone explains it to me?” Those are the words of the Ethiopian in Acts 8. Those are also the words of most of us. We need others to explain some of the tougher portions of Scripture. Thankfully, God has put lots of “others” all around us! As you write down your questions, share them often with others—with friends, with a text to your LifeGroup, with a Facebook message, with an email to your pastor. We all grow when we teach one another, so rely on the “WeVersion” of the Bible and ask away!

### 4—1 Section/2 Questions

Almost every effective Bible-reading plan encourages us to slow down and ask questions of the Bible. You can breeze through the words, check you “do devotion” box, and not grow spiritually by a single centimeter. Or you could ask two questions for every section you read. Ask (1) What does this word/phrase/paragraph/chapter mean? Keep asking that question until you could summarize it in your own words. Then ask (2) what does this mean for me? Think of the connections between your life and the life of those who first read these words. What is God trying to teach you as he prepares you for every good work?

### 3—Patience, Grasshopper!

A group of pastors once asked each other, “What’s the difference between a good sermon and a great one?” One of them answered, “About four hours.” While you might not read your Bible four hours each day (although it would be awesome if we all did!), the same principle is true. The longer you chew on God’s truth, the better your time with God will be. Therefore, instead of reading for length (one chapter/day), consider reading for time (20 minutes/day). Pick your section, set an alarm, and meditate on it until the alarm sounds. You will soon find out that your best insights will come the second or third time through the text.

### 2—Jesus Journal

Journaling might remind you of a twelve year old girl with a locked notebook and a secret tiny key (“Dear Diary...”). But devotional journaling is for God’s bearded sons as much as his young daughters. As you read, jot down notes, questions, applications, and prayers. Every month, skim your entries and be amazed at how the Holy Spirit has been answering your questions and your prayers.

### 1—Forgive Yourself

Any life-long habit will hit some major roadblocks. You might go a day or a week (or a month or a year) without reading the Bible at home. But an empty stomach is no reason to say no to a buffet today; and an empty soul is no reason to say no to a Bible buffet either. God’s not mad (Jesus died for our backwards priorities), so enjoy his forgiveness and pick up where you left off. You will be so glad you did.

There is so much more to be said, but we pray these ten tips help your home to be a place of the Word, of worship, and of prayer with our glorious God. May the Spirit strengthen you to seek first the kingdom of God, trusting that everything you need will be provided. God bless your sanctuary!