

Nate Pickowicz. *How To Eat Your Bible: A Simple Approach to Learning and Loving the Word of God*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2021. Pp. 144. ISBN:978-0-8024-2039-8. Paper cover, \$10.59/ eBook, \$3.89.

Fighting biblical illiteracy is the clarion call of this book. Nate Pickowicz believes this stems from not only a lack of knowledge, but also a lack of love for God's Word. This neglect cuts "off the very source of spiritual food that you need to live a Christian life" (19). Pickowicz is pastor of Harvest Bible Church in Gilman Ironworks, NH and serves as the general editor of The American Puritans Series (H&E Publishing).

Pickowicz's book concerns itself with one's view toward Scripture—Is it *sufficient*? Can I really come to love it? Is it *true*? Is it *clear*? Is it *authoritative*? His purpose is twofold. For those without Christ "it's my greatest hope that you would see your need for the Savior, turn from your sins, and trust in Jesus Christ today" and for the child of God who struggles to read, understand, and love God's Word, his hope is that you will "truly feast on Scripture ... learn how to eat your Bible" (19).

The introduction (*Setting the Table*) addresses the absence of conviction concerning the Bible's power to transform (13). Is the Bible enough—is it sufficient? The inspired Scriptures are profitable for 1) *teaching*, 2) *reproof*, 3) *correction*, and 4) *training in righteousness* (13-14). They change your 1) *spirit* through hearing the gospel, 2) *mind* by giving you true knowledge *about* and *from* God, 3) *emotions*, and 4) *will* (volition). The Scriptures are powerful and able to change your life from the inside out (19).

Next (*Starving for the Word*), God wants His children to know and love His Word, but we suffer from famine (Amos 8:11-12). Pickowicz asserts, "The problem of biblical illiteracy feels very much like a judgment of God because of our national sinfulness (23) ... our appetite for the Word of God is greatly diminished" (25). This famine can be reversed (26), but current

approaches fall short (28). He calls for a long-term approach— “[Making] your end goal not merely to read the Bible but to know and understand it—to *love* and *treasure* it as God’s holy, sufficient, transforming Word” (30).

Chapter 2 (*Beginning with Prayer*) provides clarity on understanding what the Bible is— “how to access it, understand it, love it, and be changed by it” (40). According to Pickowicz the Bible is an *intellectual* book (understanding takes mental effort) (41), as well as a *spiritual* book, “If the content of the Bible is holy and spiritual, then the readers of the Bible need to need the help of the Spirit to rightly understand and apply its truths (43). This is done through *illumination*; therefore, we must ask the Author for help (45-46).

Chapter 3 (*Read: What Does It Say?*) answers “Is it [Scripture] true? The Bible claims this (*veracity*) for itself and is trustworthy in all it states (74). Preparation is important (58-60), as well as planning, instead of randomly opening your Bible or doing a Bible-in-a-year plan, Pickowicz suggests the long-term approach of a Seven Year Bible Study Method. Finding out “What does it say?” calls for *assiduousness*, “[Approaching] the text with great care, intense scrutiny, and unrelenting vigor” (68- 75).

In chapter 4 (*Study: What does it mean?*) Pickowicz provides tools to get at the meaning of God’s revelation (78) and explains the clarity (*perspicuity*) of Scripture. While the Bible is deep (Rom 11:33), it is comprehensible (Ps 19:7), especially considering the Spirit’s illuminating ministry (80). He discusses *exegesis* (the careful study of the Scriptures to discover original intent), and *hermeneutics* (the art and science of interpretation) (81). He reveals *errors to avoid*: 1) *Eisegesis* (subjectively reading into the text), 2) *Spiritualization* (looking for deeper meaning than originally intended), and 3) *Over-Personalization* (we are not the Bible’s focus) (82-84). Interpretation will employ several principles: 1) *literal* principle (normally/naturally), 2)

grammatical principle (following language rules), 3) *historical* principle (original hearers' understanding), and 4) *synthesis* principle (interpreting unclear with clear passages) (89-90).

Chapter 5 (*Use: How Do I Apply It?*) relates Scripture's authority. God has the right to tell us what to do and "He does so through His *special revelation*" (99). God's "speaking" is a call to action and so, "before applying the text, one needs to discover the text's spiritual principle (*principlizing*) (101). Pickowicz concludes (*Eat Up!*) with The Seven Year Bible plan with strategies and tips for developing and designing your plan (125-135).

A couple of positives worth noting. First, the refreshing emphasis on prayer and Bible study—who knew? Prayer is not just a facet *of*, but foremost *in* eating our Bibles. Pickowicz believes that many believers fail to realize that prayer is an act of faith (47), "Approaching Bible study with prayer places our trust in the Author of the Scriptures and asks Him to give us His spiritual eyesight" (47). Prayer is both a *pre*-study and *post*-study endeavor (61).

Second, Pickowicz provides one of the most uncomplicated presentations on biblical application. He gives the original meaning of *apply* ("to fasten to"), and so application is the *fastening* of scriptural truths to our lives (100). He points out the failure of the subjective "*what does this verse mean to me?*", whereby the reader becomes the authority (100). The belief that Scripture is sufficient to transform is essential to application, and God desires two types of outcomes (103), summed up in, "What does God want me to *know* and what does He want me to *do*?" (109-115).

How To Eat Your Bible will serve as an introduction to Bible study, especially for: 1) new believers, supplying an encouraging and uncomplicated guide, or 2) lay people who want to "go deeper." Other works are better suited for the academy, such as Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart's *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Zondervan Academic, 2014). Every reader is

encouraged, “If you do nothing else but read through the whole Bible every year for the rest of your life, the Lord will surely use his word to instruct, convict, sanctify, and bless you” (64).

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