



# THE PROCESS

## ALIVE TO GOD IN SCRIPTURE

### OVERVIEW

For centuries,<sup>1</sup> Christ-followers were taught how to bring the words of Scripture into their lives, to sit with them for a season, “chewing on them” like a dog chews on a bone, working out their invitations.

Reading the Bible in this way means, “**to work out the personal meaning through careful thought.**” This process is at the heart of being alive to God in Scripture.

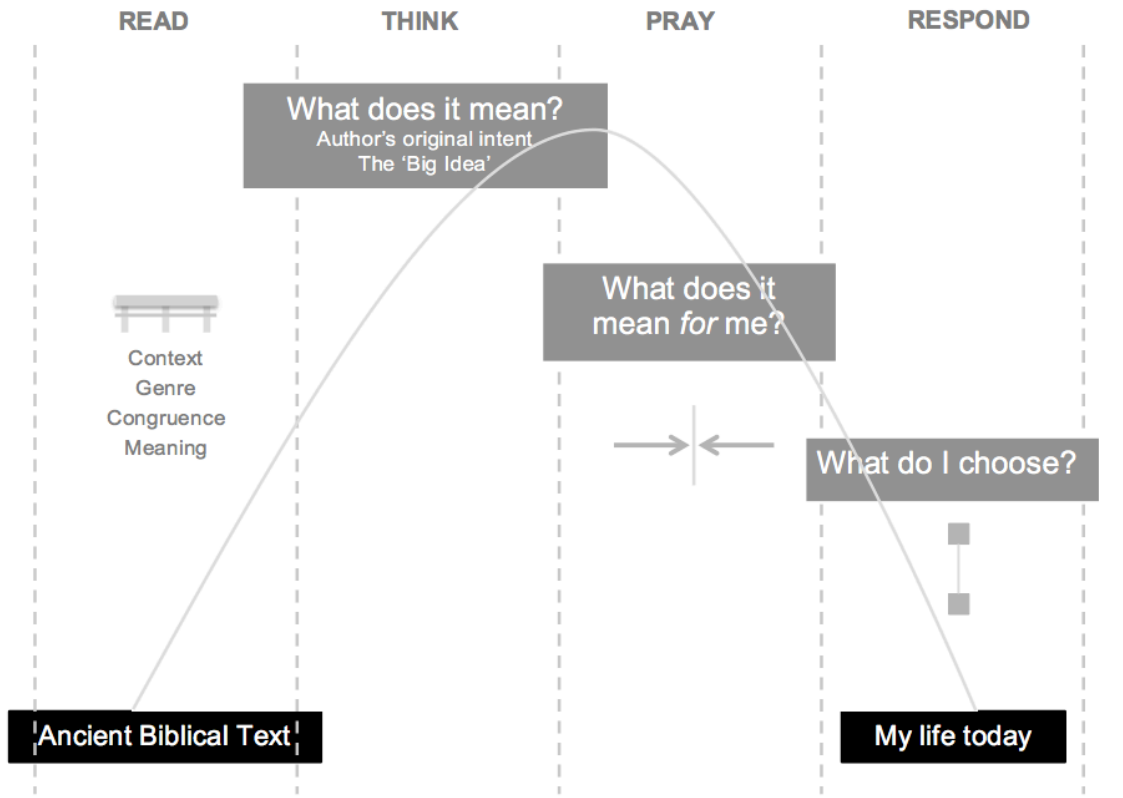
Our approach includes four movements. Like kneading dough, the process is back-and-forth, pushing and waiting for the action of each process to present itself, then folding it all back into the whole.<sup>2</sup>

In the ‘big picture,’ we are making the journey from the ancient Biblical text to our lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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1 . The ancient practice of listening and responding to God taught in Scripture evolved throughout the early church through Origen (3rd century), and then St. Ambrose (4th century), who taught introduced it to St. Augustine (5th century). It was a regular practice in monasteries by the time of St. Benedict in the 6th century. The scholastic form of spiritual reading was formalized as a four-step process by the Carthusian monk Guigo II during the 12th century: (in today’s language) reading, thinking, praying, and responding.

2. In this monastic form of spiritual reading, the interaction between the four elements is experienced as moments rather than steps in a process. The interaction among the moments is dynamic and fluid, back and forth.



## READ

We will spend one week in this phase, which is essential to engaging the work of the heart.

The invitation here is to slow down. S-L-O-W way down.

Similar to a state trooper doing a rolling slowdown in 70 mile-per-hour traffic, weaving back and forth across lanes bringing cars to a halt, we must gradually disrupt the hurried pace of our busy lives in order to be attentive and responsive to God's invitations.

This kind of reading represents an inner shift from *control* to *receptivity*.

## THINK

The focus is, **“What does the passage mean?”**

Biblical writers lived within a distinct historical context and their writings address a specific audience with a clear message.



Our work is to understand the original meaning of the author's message.

We will spend three weeks in this phase.

This phase involves an inner shift from *analysis to awakening*.

## PRAY

The key question is: **“What does passage mean for me?”**

Not “what does it mean to me,” but “for me.” The difference is profound.

In prayer we acknowledge the truths that begin presenting themselves, then actively pursue God about what this means for us.

We will practice this phase for two weeks.

This kind of interaction with the passage involves an inner shift from *awareness to invitation*.

## RESPOND

Here we move into choosing: **“What must I choose in order to live in fidelity to God's invitations?”**

This involves the will, and a careful examination of both the ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ implications of what God shows us. We make choices and then rest in God through faith to meet us in that place.

Our work here will consume our final week.

This phase involves an inner shift from *processing to Presence*.

## SUMMARY

This kind of interaction brings the process full-circle, from a text written in the ancient world, now made alive to us through the Holy Spirit, personally and dynamically, here in the 21st century.