

When did I last read the Bible? I mean *really* read it.

How long has it been since I spent time immersed in the history, the wisdom, the music, the poetry and the healing so inexplicably bound into that book—that Good Book that draws together and splits apart the Christian community? Why don't I daily carve out time to spend in reading and pondering the scriptures, as religiously and carefully as I do to read my email?

A little voice within me says, *lazy bones! You're content to let others do the work for you on Sundays, through sermons and lectionary readings.* Yes, I listen. I drink in the lessons as a parched plant slurps life-giving water, absorbing as much as it can from weekly watering. I meditate on the words and try to open myself to new insights. I tell myself I will tend and nurture my inner, thirsty plant as I step into my daily routine . . . and within an hour I find myself too preoccupied with other demands, commitments and distractions to sit down with the watering can.

Still, there are times when a certain hymn comes to mind and stays, its text looping, and I hear it, feel it, sing it like a mantra. Or a portion of scripture teases my memory until I reach for my Bible to read the full passage. At these times, the message soaks into my thirsty soul:

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters . . .
Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live (*Isaiah 55:1, 3a*).



John S. Dykes/theisspot

Today, I Will Begin

BY CECILIA AMOROCHO HICKERSON

deep roots reach deeper still.

The verses studied, passages discussed and the hymns committed to memory rise and feed my mind, soul and spirit. I search out refreshing water and the warmth of the sun and again find both as I turn to the Word of God. Whether in a Bible study group, over coffee with a friend or at choir rehearsal, I am enriched.

I may or may not keep up daily or weekly study time. (I'm not known for sticking to schedules for very long, despite my good intentions.) But when I need to drink deep from the living water, I know where to go and what to do.

In the words of St. Anthony of the Desert, "Every day I say to myself, today I will begin." And God says, "I am with you."

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Tending to our spiritual well-being through Bible study requires discipline, patience and sacrifice, as does tending our houseplants or a garden. It's not a rewarding undertaking for the capricious or casual admirer. But in Bible study, as in gardening, sticking to the routine in spite of fatigue or distractions can bless us with new growth and deep roots. This I know and, at times, have achieved; when I find myself withering and choked off by strangling worries and doubts, I am nourished and strengthened as those