

# The R.E.S.T. Method for Reading the Bible

Building the Skill of Interacting with the Bible

## What is the R.E.S.T. method?

The R.E.S.T. method is a Bible reading method designed to help current *and* potential disciples of Jesus interact with the Bible. This simple Bible reading method can help potential disciples understand the Bible. For current disciples, this method is not primarily focused on applying what you just read to your life. Instead, it is designed to strengthen your relationship with God by helping you properly interact with the text. This is also an excellent method to use if you are helping another person understand the Bible.

## What does it mean to interact with the Bible?

The Bible is one of God's chosen ways to express Himself in the world today; therefore, the Bible isn't an ordinary book. It's our window into the nature and character of God and the nature and character of humanity. By default, this includes you. Thus, reading the Bible is like entering into a unique relationship. As you read the Bible, *the Bible is reading you*. As you study the Bible, *the Bible is studying you*. As you engage with the Bible, God can and will communicate with you in several ways. Because of this, we don't simply need to read the Bible; we need to interact with it.

In any good relationship, there is both **giving** and **receiving**. You interact with someone by giving what you have to offer and receiving what they have to offer. To interact with the Bible means that you are giving something to God and receiving something from God as you read.

## How does the REST method work?

The REST Method uses the acronym R.E.S.T. to help explain how this Bible reading method works. **R** stands for *RESPONSE*, **E** stands for *EXPLAIN*, **S** stands for *SHAPE*, and **T** stands for *TAKEAWAY*. Each letter is broken down in more detail below.



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**R** stands for **RESPONSE**. Here, our goal is to write out our initial thoughts. Here we aren't looking for theological accuracy yet, nor are we looking for correct interpretations; we just want to write out our initial *response*.

In terms of interacting with God and His word, this is where you **give** your thoughts about what's going on. You express externally what is happening internally.

- Good Examples of this would be:
  - I felt Joy as I read Moses' song of deliverance in Exodus 15.
  - I felt Confused as I read Romans 9
  - I learned something new about Jesus when I read Psalms 22
  - Why did God take advice from a spirit in 1 Kings 22?
  - Where did this take place?
- Bad Examples of this would be:
  - Having an initial thought but being too prideful or embarrassed to express it. It's God. He won't hate you for expressing yourself.
  - Being too full of shame to express your thoughts. Some passages reveal deep wounds. If you express them, God can heal you.

**E** stands for **EXPLAIN**. In this section, we want to explain what the author was trying to communicate to his audience to the best of our ability. Here we aren't looking for a perfect interpretation; we just want to write out what we believe the author was trying to communicate. Here, it would also be good to explain what genre the author is communicating in. This will help ensure that you are explaining the passage correctly.

This section may inspire you to grab a commentary or two to help you understand what is going on, but for the purpose of interacting with the Bible, write down what you believe the author is saying **first**. You are in the best position to compare your findings to someone else after you have written your thoughts down.

In terms of interacting with God and His word, this section is when you attempt to *clarify* what you read (*what you received*) with what was actually being communicated (what was the author attempting to say).

- A Good Example of this would be:
  - In Psalms 23, the author lets us know that God is a good shepherd and will take care of us no matter where we are in life. He will take care of us whether we are by still waters, in the valley of death, or at the table of our enemies.
- A bad example of this would be:
  - Psalms 23: The Lord is my shepherd. (Just repeating what you read)
  - Psalms 23: God is my shepherd, so I'm good (too vague)
  - Psalms 23: God will take care of me (why will God take care of you?)



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**S** stands for **SHAPE**. In this section, we ask the questions “How does what I just read shape my view of God? and “How does what I just read shape my view of people/humanity?” The Bible is one of God’s primary tools for shaping and transforming humanity. That is what it was designed to do; shape disciples into people who reflect the nature and character of God well. The Bible shapes both our view of humanity and our view of God. The S section records *how* what you read shapes what you believe about God and humanity.

For potential disciples, the Bible is still influencing and shaping your beliefs about God and humanity even though you aren’t a disciple; you just have to decide if the beliefs being shaped *are more or less true* after reading the Bible. You can ask questions like, “is what I am reading out of the Bible line up with the reality of human nature or not?” to begin to test the truth claims of the Bible.

For both current and potential disciples, some passages will influence your view of God and humanity simultaneously. Be sure to document how what you read shapes your views on both of these entities as well. Furthermore, it is good to note that shaping is an ONGOING process. You may read something in the future that **remolds** you and gives you a new perspective about God. Be open to this when this happens.

In terms of interacting with God and His word, this section is where you allow what you have **received** to shape and influence you. In other words, how does what you read influence what you think about God and or about humanity?

- Good examples of this would be:
  - Reading about the Israelites going back into sin in Judges 2 shapes my view of humanity by showing me that people need leadership
  - Reading about the Israelites going back into sin in Judges 2 shapes my view of humanity by showing me that people are prone to living a life apart from God
  - Reading Isaiah 66 shapes my view of God by showing me that God is a God of justice and redemption
  - Reading Isaiah 53 shapes my view of God by showing me that God and His servant are deeply committed to the restoration of people, especially the children of Israel
- Bad examples of this would be:
  - Drawing definite conclusions too early
    - Judges 2 (people can live apart from God)
    - Isaiah 66 (God is immoral)



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**T** is for **TAKEAWAY**. Here is where you reflect on your thoughts after interacting with God's word. This may or may not inspire some kind of action. Your takeaway can be many things: a summary of thoughts, a summary of emotions, homework that you need to do after reading this passage, or recording what God spoke to you as you read and interacted with the text.

In terms of interacting with God and His word, this section is where you reflect on what you have **given** and what you have **received**. Following your reflection, you can either give God something, such as praise or prayer, or you can take some kind of action motivated by your reflections.

- Good examples of this would be:
  - Praise God for something
  - Go and pray about what you read
  - Do more research
  - Summarize your thoughts in a few sentences
  - Write a plan for how you can obey what you think God may have spoken to you
- Bad examples of this would be:
  - Doing the same takeaway every time. Your takeaway should have some level of variety to it.
  - Having a takeaway that you know you won't follow up on and complete. If you know you won't complete it, find a way to break it down into something you would complete.

## Additional Resources:

For additional video resources, check out our online video explaining the REST method or the playlist supporting the REST method.

### REST Method Video:

<https://youtu.be/uT5TX-NNHdw>

### Playlist:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfi2FKt-hTKbNlspVXT-Fiy0JclvjaTkh>

## How to build the skill of interacting with the Bible?

If you improve at interacting with the Bible, you will strengthen your relationship with God. You can build the skill of interacting with the Bible by consistently repeating the REST Method steps. Whether it's daily, weekly, or monthly, the more repetitions you put in to build the skill of interacting with the Bible, the better you will be at interacting with God.

*Below you will find a template you can use to help you go through the REST Method. Feel free to print it off as many times as you need or write your interaction down in a separate notebook.*



# The R.E.S.T. Method for Reading the Bible

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R: What is your initial **RESPONSE** to what you just read?

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E: **EXPLAIN** what this passage was attempting to express.

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S: How does what you read **SHAPE** your view of God and or humanity?

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T: What is your **TAKEAWAY** after interacting with God's word?

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