



Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture

John Piper

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Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture John Piper Does it take a miracle to read the Bible?

God wrote a book, and its pages are full of his glory. But we cannot see his beauty on our own, with mere human eyes.

In *Reading the Bible Supernaturally*, John Piper aims to show us how God works through his written Word when we pursue the natural act of reading the Bible, so that we experience his sightgiving power--a power that extends beyond the words on the page.

Ultimately, Piper shows us that in the seemingly ordinary act of reading the Bible, something miraculous happens: we are given eyes to behold the glory of the living God.

Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture Details

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From Reader Review Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture for online ebook

Josh says

Excellent. One of Piper's best. This book will stir your love for Scripture, and your desire to read actively and attentively the inspired word of God. Take and read!

Bob says

This was a bit of a slow read (over one month start to finish) for me for a couple of reasons. One reason was that I was dividing my attention between this and a couple of other books. But the main reason was the subject matter itself. Among other aspects of reading the Bible well, Piper lays some stress on the importance of reading it carefully and thoughtfully. In view of this, I found myself lingering over paragraphs and chapters at a more methodical pace than I ordinarily would.

I always thrill to join Piper in his exaltation of Christ and his joyful exultation in the glories of God.

Becky says

Reading the Bible Supernaturally is a companion book to John Piper's A Peculiar Glory. Don't worry if you haven't read it, though. He tells you just enough about the first book to situate readers for this second book. (What book should come first? It's almost like The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe and A Magician's Nephew. Almost. I would liken Reading the Bible Supernaturally to be The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe and A Peculiar Glory to A Magician's Nephew.)

This is John Piper writing so expect logic and clarity. He does a great job of explaining everything precisely and logically.

The book has three divisions: "The Ultimate Goal of Reading the Bible," "The Supernatural Act of Reading the Bible," and "The Natural Act of Reading the Bible Supernaturally."

"Part 1 poses the all-important question What does the Bible tell us is the ultimate goal of reading the Bible? I propose an answer with six implications and then devote ten chapters to unfolding and testing those implications. Part 2 works out the inference from part 1 that reading the Bible really must be a supernatural act, if God's goals for our reading the Bible are to be reached. Finally, part 3 treats the practical outworking of such a claim in the seemingly ordinary human act of reading—the natural act of reading the Bible supernaturally."

So what does Piper see as the ultimate goal in reading the Bible?!

"The Bible itself shows that our ultimate goal in reading the Bible is that God's infinite worth and beauty would be exalted in the everlasting, white-hot worship of the blood-bought bride of

Christ from every people, language, tribe, and nation. In other words, each time we pick up the Bible to read, we should intend that reading would lead to this end. The way that we as individuals are caught up into this ultimate aim as we read the Bible becomes clear as we spell out six implications that flow from this proposed answer to our question. When we say that the ultimate goal of reading the Bible is that God's infinite worth and beauty would be exalted in the everlasting, white-hot worship of the blood-bought bride of Christ from every people, language, tribe, and nation, we imply that: 1. the infinite worth and beauty of God are the ultimate value and excellence of the universe; 2. that the supremely authentic and intense worship of God's worth and beauty is the ultimate aim of all his work and word; 3. that we should always read his word in order to see this supreme worth and beauty; 4. that we should aim in all our seeing to savor his excellence above all things; 5. that we should aim to be transformed by this seeing and savoring into the likeness of his beauty, 6. so that more and more people would be drawn into the worshiping family of God until the bride of Christ—across all centuries and cultures—is complete in number and beauty."

Why must the Bible be read supernaturally? What does Piper mean by this phrase?

"What I mean is that the act of reading, in order to be done as God intended, must be done in dependence on God's supernatural help. The Bible gives two decisive reasons: Satan and sin. That is, we have a blinding enemy outside and a blinding disease inside. Together these two forces make it impossible for human beings to read the Bible, as God intended, without supernatural help. It seems to me that thousands of people approach the Bible with little sense of their own helplessness in reading the way God wants them to."

He continues,

"Bible reading that only collects facts, or relieves a guilty conscience, or gathers doctrinal arguments, or titillates esthetic literary tastes, or feeds historical curiosities—this kind of Bible reading Satan is perfectly happy to leave alone. He has already won the battle. But reading that hopes to see the supreme worth and beauty of God—reading that aims to be satisfied with all that God is for us in Christ, reading that seeks to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8)—this reading Satan will oppose with all his might. And his might is supernatural. Therefore, any reading that hopes to overcome his blinding power will be a supernatural reading."

Ultimately he concludes,

"It is a miracle when God's word is implanted in us, and it is a miracle when in it we taste the sweetness of God's goodness. From that moment on, all our reading of God's word is supposed to be an extension of that miracle in daily life—until we "grow up into salvation."

If the Bible is to be read supernaturally, what is natural about the process?

"God does not see for us. God enables us to see. We do the seeing. And the supernatural act of seeing "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" is by means of the natural act of seeing the story of the gospel written (or spoken) in natural human words."

And,

"All the human effort and skill that you can muster to construe the meaning of biblical passages will be called for. The glory is seen through the meaning of the text. And the meaning is found by reading and thinking. God is united to the man Jesus. The glory of God is united to the meaning of biblical texts. Therefore, when the miracle of seeing and savoring the glory of God happens, it is in the act of reading and thinking. We read. God reveals. God gives the supernatural miracle. We act the supernatural miracle."

In the final chapters of the book, he addresses this question: "How do you go about living the Christian life in such a way that you are actually doing the living, and yet another—the Holy Spirit—is decisively doing the living in and through your living?" His answers are all in acronyms.

I said Piper was logical, and, I meant it. I did. But also expect passion and enthusiasm. Piper's love of God, love of the Word, is apparent on every page of this book. Piper DELIGHTS in God and DELIGHTS in teaching others to delight in God too.

Here's one of my favorite passages:

So we open our Bibles with a sweet sense that even though we don't deserve it, God will lead us and instruct us. Our very reading is the experience of gospel grace. Christ died for sinners so that the promise would come true: God helps sinners understand the Bible. These blood-bought promises are given to us so that we might believe them. Not just hear them. Believe them. Trust them. Because, remember from Galatians 3:5, God "supplies the Spirit to you . . . by hearing with faith." We stand before the Bible ready to read. We hear a promise. "I will instruct you and teach you." We put our faith in it. The Spirit moves in the channel of faith, and we "act the miracle." We read supernaturally. So it is good to gather some of these precious promises and store them up: The Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright. (Prov. 2:6–7) Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Prov. 3:5–6) I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. (Ps. 32:8) You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. (Ps. 73:24) Do not be anxious about . . . what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. (Luke 12:11–12) Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31–32) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5–8)

And also this one:

When we read the Bible, its meaning is not the ideas that come into our head that may be "meaningful" to us. Those ideas may or may not be part of what the author meant. Rather, when we read the Bible we are digging for the gold of what inspired writers wanted to communicate. We are not creating meaning. We are seeking it.

A good book is worth reading and occasionally quoting. A great book is worth rereading and quoting liberally. This book is one of the best I've read this year. I will definitely want to reread it!!!

E says

The subtitle of this book aptly describes what it is all about. Piper argues that God gave us the Scriptures ultimately so that God's "infinite worth and beauty" would be praised by the "everlasting, white-hot worship" of the worldwide redeemed. Piper makes the case that such praise will come about only through "seeing, savoring, and being transformed" by God's glory in Scripture. And THAT will only happen supernaturally (hence the title) through the work of God.

This doesn't mean we don't have great responsibilities ourselves when reading the Word--we do. Piper commends "aggressive attentiveness" in reading the text, never reading lazily but always questioning Scripture relentlessly and then seeking answers to those questions from the text itself.

Piper handles all three parts of these thesis quite well. Part 1 of the work defends the argument Piper has for why God gave us the Bible in the first place. Part 2 defends the need to have God open our eyes and hearts when reading (the Pharisees are a great negative example of this). Part 3 deals with what we are to bring to the table when we read. I really liked this part because Piper lets us under the hood to get a glimpse of how he himself reads the Scriptures. He is not a "just me and Bible guy," thankfully, but he still drives home the point that we should always be asking about the logical connections and conclusions the text is making, seeking to understand how they flow. If we do not know why a "for" or "therefore" is there, for example, then we haven't understood the text.

Everything Piper writes is worth perusing, but this is worth a serious read. I hope it has a great impact on how modern evangelicals tackle the very words of God.

Larry Fulmer says

In His book; "Reading the Bible Supernaturally," Piper encourages his readers to look beyond just simply words and phrases. Rather that reading the bible supernaturally would lead us into searching, asking, and applying the Word to our lives so that we might experience the glory of God through His written Word, and through Christ.

I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who desires to know God's Word and to the study of Scripture. This book has challenged me in my own Bible Study to look beyond, and to see the meaning of what the authors intended.

Kofi Opoku says

This was quite helpful. I particularly enjoyed the section on bible interpretation. John Piper makes the case that the ordinary act of bible reading should yield the supernatural effect of seeing and savoring the beauty of God.

Logan says

Maybe this is due to my longstanding dislike of audio books but I didn't enjoy this very much. There was some beneficial material in here but overall it felt like it should have been a pamphlet rather than a book and seemed to drag on and on covering the same material. Also, clearly Piper's pet phrase is "white-hot worship of the blood-bought bride of Christ" and it was far overused.

Jeannie says

There is no way to rush through this important book. Definitely changed the way I approach the Bible.

Tom Robbins says

Good book. I especially enjoyed chapters 20ff where it gets more practical. An interesting read.

David Steele says

The day I completed John Piper's newest book, *Reading the Bible Supernaturally*, I was alerted to a shocking and sobering statistic, namely, only forty-five percent of those who regularly attend church read the Bible more than once a week. Such a statistic should prompt Christians to radically shift their priorities and make Bible reading a normal part of their lives. If less than half of Christian people are reading the Bible on a regular basis, we are not only short-circuiting our joy; we are failing to showcase the glory of God and find satisfaction in his all-sufficient grace.

Part One: The Ultimate Goal of Reading the Bible

Reading the Bible Supernaturally, by John Piper is directed at people who regularly feast on the Word of God. My assumption is that if people neglect Bible reading, they will have no interest in reading a book about the Bible. Piper offers a modest proposal in *Reading the Bible Supernaturally*:

Our ultimate goal in reading the Bible is that God's infinite worth and beauty would be exalted in the everlasting, white-hot worship of the blood-bought bride of Christ from every people, language, tribe, and nation.

Six implications flow forth from this proposal:

1. that the infinite worth and beauty of God are the ultimate value and excellence of the universe;
2. that the supremely authentic and intense worship of God's worth and beauty is the ultimate

aim of all his work and word;

3. that we should always read his word in order to see this supreme worth and beauty;

4. that we should aim in all our seeing to savor his excellence above all things;

5. that we should aim to be transformed by this seeing and savoring into the likeness of his beauty,

6. so that more and more people would be drawn into the worshipping family of God until the bride of Christ - across all centuries and cultures - is complete in number and beauty.

The proposal and the six implications make up the first part of the book help set the stage for the remaining sections.

Part Two: The Supernatural Act of Reading the Bible

In Part Two, the author argues that reading the Bible in a way that glorifies God is a supernatural act. God expects that his Word is read supernaturally a feat that Piper expounds with skill and persuasiveness.

Part Three: The Natural Act of Reading the Bible Supernaturally

Part three may surprise some readers as Piper makes a case for joining the natural efforts of Bible reading with supernatural assistance from God. The aim of the author in this section is to “encourage a deep dependence on God and the fullest use of natural powers in the supernatural act of reading the Bible.” In passage after passage, Piper demonstrates how this view matches the biblical record.

Summary

John Piper succeeds in defending his proposal. In the process, he encourages Christians to read “actively” with “aggressive attentiveness.” His plea is for readers to be rooted in a “deep understanding of the glorious calling to pursue the natural act of reading the Bible supernaturally.” Clearly, we are in the midst of a crisis if less than half of Christians are reading their Bibles on a regular basis. Something must change in the days ahead. The best place to begin is by reading the Bible supernaturally.

Noel Burke says

This was very good indeed! I was very challenged and convicted about my own scripture reading. It's not enough to be faithful in reading or hearing the word each day. Are we actively engaging with the text? The author talked about why we should engage the text and how could go about doing it. I plan to follow up on some of the resources provided in the book soon.

Liam says

Very good book.

I found that Piper starts from the ground up with this book in his theology of the Bible. So if you're familiar with him, there may be much that you've heard before. In particular I found the way he approached his thesis (backing it up by making a detailed argument for every phrase (and sometimes word)) in the early chapters to be a bit of a slog. However the last few chapters of the book were excellent! There Piper goes into more detail on specific ways to read the Bible thoughtfully, and also how to engage the text emotionally. In addition the appendix will be helpful in introducing readers to Arcing.

If you're familiar with Piper, you may just want to skim the first half of the book and get to the meat at the end. However if you're not familiar with him, there's a lot of gems there as well.

Highly recommended!

Laurel Hicks says

I listened to this book, but I need to read it again with my eyes opened.

Jesvin Jose says

I love John Piper and his passion for God and His glory! His book "Future grace" was probably one of his best works I read (if not the best) and this one doesn't disappoint as well.

In Part 1 of the book, Piper's main aim is to show that God's ultimate aim through the Scriptures is to show and display His glory (His beauty and worth) and that as we read the Bible the way it should be read, we will 'see' that glory, 'savor' it and be 'transformed' by it. Our transformation will be so that more people will be drawn into the worshipping family of God, until the bride of Christ is complete in number and beauty. Piper is relentlessly Biblical in proving his thesis, which is why I think this might be the strongest section of the book.

In part 2, Piper shows that reading the Bible is a supernatural act and that we can read the Bible and not understand it if we have not been supernaturally awakened by the Holy Spirit (like the Pharisees – Chapter 12). The blinding enemy outside (Satan) and the deep hardness inside (the flesh) keep us from seeing the glory of God in Scripture and so we need supernatural help to open our minds and awaken our hearts. Again, excellent thesis from the Bible.

In Part 3, Piper illustrates the practical aspects (or the natural act) of reading the Bible supernaturally. Here Piper challenges our mechanical and passive way of reading the Bible and encourages us to be "aggressively attentive", asking questions that bring out what the Biblical authors intended to communicate. He illustrates it with the riveting story of Louis Agassiz and the fish, which shows us that painstaking observation can help mine treasures in God's Word. The other story of the "Boy with a squirrel" makes the same point too. The main message from these chapters for our Bible reading is to "Look, Look, Look" – i.e., be attentive active observers of the text! Piper then sets out to help us see the connections between words, phrases and propositions, along with the method of Bible arcing.

I think this book is a treasure and a great reminder for me personally to invest time studying the Scriptures - to see, savor and be transformed by the worth and beauty of God. It surely has re-kindled my love for the

Word of God and so, I give this book my highest recommendation!

Russell Threet says

When you decide to read a book by John Piper you had better be prepared. He makes no apologies for diving deep into his subject matter and "Reading the Bible Supernaturally" is no exception. If you have ever wanted to understand more deeply why it is so important for Christians to engage with the Bible then this book is worth the effort. Not only does Piper discuss the importance of reading Scripture he also addresses the miraculousness of people understanding the Bible. We do not think about that being a miracle, but Piper brings into full focus the depths of God working even in the simple act of reading the Scriptures.

Be prepared to think and then to be filled with thanksgiving as this book unfolds what it means to not look at and read the Bible as just another book, but to instead focus on "Reading the Bible Supernaturally".
