

“Before you open The Book, be sure to spend time in this book. It will enrich and amplify your experience with the Word of God!”

Lee Strobel, author of *The Case for Christ*

“This book will help you read Scripture in a deeper, more meaningful way.”

Russell Moore, president, The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

“Just as our bodies need right posture for physical health, so our hearts need right posture for spiritual health. Matt Smethurst’s book offers a posture for Bible reading that will serve the heart of anyone set on right worship.”

Jen Wilkin, Bible teacher and author of *Women of the Word*

“As evidenced by his social media presence, my friend Matt Smethurst is one of the more thoughtful Christian commentators out there today. I’m thankful he’s written a book on how to rightly interact with God’s Word. This is something that no Christian can afford to neglect.”

Shai Linne, Christian hip-hop artist and author of *God Made Me and You*

“This wise guide will help you not only to read God’s Word well, but to be transformed by it.”

Karen Swallow Prior, professor, Liberty University and author of *On Reading Well*

“If your Bible reading needs a jump-start, I highly recommend this thoughtful yet easily approachable book.”

Kelly Minter, Bible teacher and author of *No Other Gods*

“It’s amazing there’s no resource like this.”

Rick James, publisher of Cru Resources and Cru Press

“This book is a treasure.”

Burk Parsons, pastor, St. Andrew’s Chapel and chief publishing officer of Ligonier Ministries

“This timely book by my friend Matt Smethurst teaches us how to humble ourselves and approach Scripture the right way.”

Rick Warren, founding pastor of Saddleback Church and author of *The Purpose Driven Life*

“We need this engaging and insightful book.”

Sam Allberry, Ravi Zacharias International Ministries and author of *7 Myths About Singleness*

“Smethurst teaches how to approach the Bible not just as a book, but as the best and most important of all books.”

Tim Challies, blogger, Challies.com

“This book invites you into a fresh way of approaching Scripture, so that you will be drawn into it and better positioned to build your life on it.”

Nancy Guthrie, Bible teacher and author of *What Every Child Should Know About Prayer*



BEFORE YOU OPEN *your* BIBLE

NINE HEART POSTURES FOR
APPROACHING GOD'S WORD

MATT SMETHURST

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BEFORE YOU OPEN YOUR BIBLE

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INTRODUCTION:

TOO DAUNTING OR TOO FAMILIAR?

Have you ever been intimidated by the Bible? It happened to me again thirty minutes ago. I came to a section in my Bible reading plan that has long puzzled me.

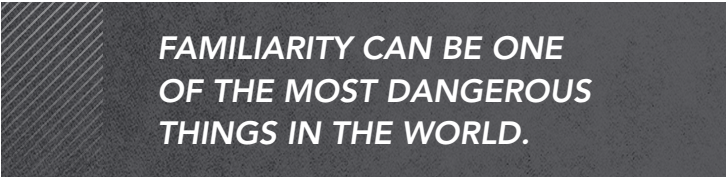
This experience isn't uncommon. Few of us are biblical experts—though we may have started enough annual reading plans to be really comfortable with Genesis.

So why does the Bible intimidate us? Sometimes it's because of its *size*. The thing is massive, if you haven't noticed—a whole library wedged between two covers.

Other times we're intimidated by what we *don't* understand. It is an ancient book, after all, filled with names and places and customs and conventions from another cultural world.

Still other times the Bible intimidates us because of what we *do* understand. I think it was Mark Twain who quipped that the parts of the Bible that troubled him most were not the ones he didn't grasp but the ones that he did. It's true; Scripture often doesn't say what we wish it did.

Others, meanwhile, wouldn't say they're necessarily intimidated by their Bibles. A better



**FAMILIARITY CAN BE ONE
OF THE MOST DANGEROUS
THINGS IN THE WORLD.**

word might be *bored*. They believe in it, but they've ceased to be amazed by it because of sheer familiarity.

No matter how valuable or precious they are, it's incredibly easy to take familiar things for granted, isn't it? Familiarity can be one of the most dangerous things in the world.

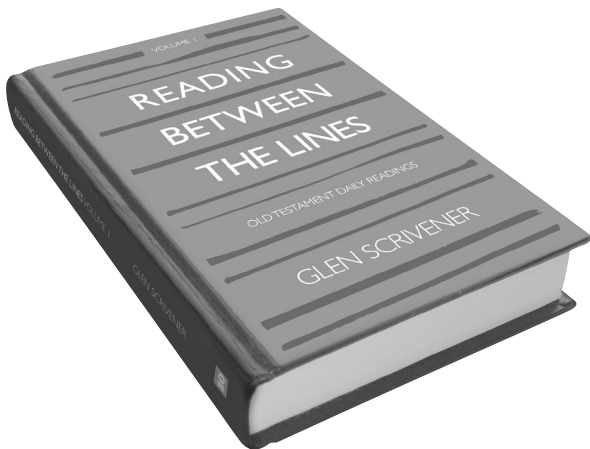
How we approach things matters in a huge way. The world of sports is an obvious example—and a general analogy for life. Whether we're talking about a pitcher on the mound or a runner at the starting line, an athlete's simple approach can make all the difference.

So whether you are new to the Christian faith or someone who has been following Jesus for a long time, and especially if you are just exploring what Christianity is all about, I hope this book will help open your eyes to all that awaits you in God's Word—and what you may be missing out on simply because of your approach. At the risk of sounding like your mother, the issue could be “poor posture.” Of the heart, that is.

Thankfully, there are many good resources on how to read, study, and apply the Bible. But I'm not aware of any that focus exclusively on how to approach it in the first place. This little book aims to do just that. For without the right heart postures, we're not yet ready to start reading.

“It’s not complicated: if Glen Scrivener writes it, I read it.”

—Matt Smethurst



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