



I Thought it was Going to be Boring!

I just wanted to be able to say I'd read the whole Bible. Bragging rights. I was home with my young children, homeschooling the oldest. So, while she worked on morning lessons, the toddler busy with his toys, I would settle into a favorite chair with my Bible, a journal, and an ever-present cup of coffee.

Still being fairly new at this "Bible thing," I only had a few expectations. I expected to revisit some familiar Bible stories, maybe learn a few biblical facts. Maybe do better at the next Bible Trivia game! I totally expected to hit a bunch of hard names in the Old Testament. To be honest, I expected it to be boring. And, even more truthfully, I expected to not be successful.

What I didn't expect was to have my life forever changed.

I'm so thankful I thought to journal my adventure because there were some real gems during that year. Early on, the mind-numbing march through endless names and head counts in the Old Testament caused me to drop back in the chair and pray, "Lord, there has to be more in here. Please show me something to keep me going." That was when I learned that God has a great sense of humor as He directed me to three of Benjamin's grandsons who sounded like an early Hebrew law firm: Huppim, Muppim, and Ard. I think my laughter woke the toddler that day.

There was my (apologies) disgust at the plentiful and repeated instructions for blood sacrifices. I asked God, "Why? I mean, ew. Why?" (I was so mature.) The plan I was using alternated Old and New Testament readings daily, so very soon my New Testament reading brought me to an account of the crucifixion in one of the Gospels. I heard, "That's why." And I saw it. When they witnessed Jesus' sacrifice, His blood, they GOT it, they understood. They had been taught its value, the power of blood over sin.

Later, God and I shared a sweet, somber moment when Joshua and the angel looked solemnly over the pre-battle holy ground, and I saw God's heart in what I had previously in my immaturity only been able to see as carnage.

I fell more in love with Jesus through the Gospels.

I appreciated my spiritual ancestors more through Acts.

I learned about myself through New Testament letters – who I was and who I could be.

In short, I learned in an unprecedented way that the Bible is truly alive and that God speaks through it. I read, I asked, He answered. He made me laugh, He awed me, He made me cry.

And I was stung by the Bible Study Bug. After that, I wanted more, deeper.

A small group of women in my circle felt the same way and we began to meet. We voted on Colossians and began to study our way through that little bitty, four-chapter book.

It took us a full calendar year. A wonderful, deep, soul-satisfying, growth-inducing year.

And I've been hooked ever since.

That wasn't my last year-long pilgrimage through God's Word, and I marvel each time over new truths and lessons learned. And Colossians was only the first of many Bible studies I have been blessed to do with my sisters. The most recent was here at SSBC in the study of Gideon. What a blessing on Sunday evenings to hear woman after woman around the table sharing what God was showing her through His Word. How pleased He must be. I know MY heart was full!

I am so grateful God brought me to Shady Shores Baptist Church, to a people who love the Word. I know Gideon will be just the first of many, many Bible study experiences I have with my family here. Where He'll take us, I don't know. But I do know this: It will NEVER be boring!

Respectfully submitted in His Name,
Linda Smith