



The Center of Bible Engagement compiled extensive research findings by Arnold Cole, Ed.D. & Pamela Caudill Ovwigho, Ph.D. into a document titled *“Understanding the Bible Engagement Challenge: Scientific Evidence for the Power of 4.”*

In the study, they polled 40,000 people ages 8 to 80. They wanted to see how people were engaging in Scripture. As they compiled the results, they made a profound discovery they were not even looking for when they originally planned the survey.

The study indicated that when people engaged in the Scripture one time a week, which could include a pastor instructing the congregation to “open your Bibles...”, there was negligible effect on some key areas of their life. The same result was true if people engaged in the Scriptures two times a week. The result equaled little to no effect.

Three times a week saw a small indication of life. There was a slight pulse, a faint heartbeat. Something moved in the behavior of the person engaging in Scripture.

The eye opener happened when Bible engagement reached at least four times a week.

A steady climb of impact would have been expected, but that was not the case. The level was basically stagnant over days one and two, with a small bump on day three. But when day four was reached, the effects spiked in an astounding way. The stunning findings included the following:

1. Feeling lonely drops 30%
2. Anger issues drop 32%
3. Bitterness in relationships drops 40%
4. Alcoholism drops 57%
5. Sex outside of marriage drops 68%
6. Feeling spiritually stagnant drops 60%
7. Viewing pornography drops 61%
8. Sharing your faith jumps 200%
9. Discipling others jumps 230%

The research literally leaps off the charts. The findings hammer home the truth that there are profound differences between people who engage the Scripture at least four times a week and those who engage with the Scripture less often. This data is extremely revealing. There is a full-blown effort to keep the followers of Christ from consistently reading the Bible on a daily basis.

Integral to these findings is that people who engage the Bible one to three days a week indicate basically the same effect on their personal lives as those who do not engage at all. The deceptive reality is that they can feel good about their activities without any sustainable results. They think they're being "good Christians," but their lives are no different than people who aren't Christians at all.

This can be devastating to a movement. Limited activity is elevated to the same effect as consistent activity, when it is actually the same as no activity.

The reality is that with a lack of consistent Bible engagement defined as at least four times a week, Christians have less confidence in sharing their faith with others and are more vulnerable to falling prey to false teachings, as well as a lethargy and apathy in consistently living out their faith in their circle of influence. ***The studies show that the best spiritually based predictor among 13- to 17-year-old teenagers was their engagement in Scripture.***

The other side of the coin is equally conclusive and encouraging. ***The more Christians read or listen to the Scriptures at least four times a week, the more bold they will be in sharing their faith and growing in their faith.*** Their lives will begin to have a profound impact on those immediately around them. There will also be fewer times of stagnation in their spiritual growth. They will become viral in their faith.

This mounting evidence of the impact of Scripture on not only the individuals in a society but on the actual underpinnings of an entire society can lead to the findings being discouraging when you find out that most people are not communicating to their center of gravity and are cut off, making them vulnerable to invasion. But the power of simplicity goes both ways. When a critical node is identified and reengaged, the entire system can be reinvigorated with astonishing and rapid effect.

There is an answer. There is hope. Just keep it simple.¹

¹ **JEFF MARTIN** is a Fellowship of Christian Athletes executive director and founder of Fields of Faith. This article is excerpted from Empower: The 4 Keys to Leading a Volunteer Movement with permission from B&H Publishing.