Spiritual Reading

• What is spiritual reading?
• An example of spiritual reading
• Lectio divina
• How do informational and formational reading relate to each other?
• Where does spiritual reading fit in the hermeneutical process we’ve discussed?

What is Spiritual Reading?

• Devotional approach to Scripture in which the reader goes to the Bible for the purpose of being changed by it.
• Instead of our knowledge about God, it deals with our knowledge of God and our relationship with God.
• For the purpose of growing in our relationship with God.

What is Spiritual Reading?

• It’s one form of the hermeneutical circle…

  Preunderstandings ➔ Scripture ➔ Preunderstandings

• But it’s more than being open to the text; it’s reading the Bible in order to grow in Christlikeness.
What is Spiritual Reading?

- Henry Nouwen: Spiritual reading is “letting the word descend from the mind into the heart.”

  Mind

  ↓

  Heart

What is Spiritual Reading?

- Spiritual reading is...
  - being transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2).
  - gazing steadily into Scripture so that it can show us ourselves and transform us (Jas. 1:22-25).
  - reading Scripture to become progressively Christlike (2 Cor. 3:18).

Example of Spiritual Reading

- See James B. Smith’s “The Jogging Monk and the Exegesis of the Heart.”
  - What happened to the author? What was his problem, and what did he do about it?
  - What changed in his approach to Scripture?
  - Is his new approach legitimate? Why or why not?
  - How do you react to this article?
Lectio Divina

- *Lectio divina* - practice of spiritual reading used by early church and Benedictines.
  - *Lectio* - “I read” - Read small portion of Scripture slowly and thoughtfully.
  - *Meditatio* - “I meditate” - Reflect on the passage from all angles, dwelling on it.
  - *Oratio* - “I pray” - Take any thoughts and feelings from your meditation to God in prayer.
  - *Contemplatio* - “I contemplate” - Be still before God and listen for anything he may say to you.

• Why is devotional reading a spiritual discipline?

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Formational and Informational

- What is the difference between formational reading and informational reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informational</th>
<th>Formational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read a lot quickly</td>
<td>Read a little slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical approach</td>
<td>Receptive approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional; doing</td>
<td>Relational; being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from the text</td>
<td>Personal involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master the text</td>
<td>Text masters us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Formational and Informational

- How are informational and formational reading related to each other?

- Why do we need to talk about spiritual reading in an exegesis course?

The Hermeneutical Process

- Where would devotional reading fit in the hermeneutical process we’ve discussed?

- See Mulholland handout for other approaches to devotional reading (9.2).

- For an excellent description of balance, see “The Powder River” (handout 9.4).