

31 DAYS TO A YOUNGER YOU

Arlene Pellicane



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Back to First Grade

If you could go back in time, would you?

Most of us would pass because we remember the pain of puberty, high-school breakups, and dreadful first jobs. But what about those carefree kindergarten days when every morning brought a new chance to play?

My parents were born and raised in Indonesia, and they immigrated to New York before I was born. Shoveling snow was getting to my father, so when I was six, my family moved from New York to California. I tested out of first grade and began my new school as a second grader. Most people never knew I was younger than the other kids because I was tall.

Now that I have children, I wonder if there's anything I missed by skipping first grade. First graders learn about addition and subtraction of whole numbers. They become masters of the alphabet, learning all the sounds and reading easy books. They are learning basic fundamentals and having lots of fun in the process.

Is it possible to learn the fundamentals of anything and have fun in the process? Sure, just look at little kids. Their eyes sparkle when shown a new object. They giggle with delight over simple stories. The word *fundamental* actually begins with *fun*. Have you ever looked at that word in that way? One definition of fundamental is “relating to the foundation or base, forming or serving as an essential component of a system or structure, or something that is an essential or necessary part of a system or object.”¹ As you were reading that definition, you probably weren't thinking, *Wow, that sounds exciting!*

Practicing fundamentals may seem tedious, boring, and laborious. But

therein lies one secret to looking and feeling younger: injecting *fun* into the *fundamentals*.

Can We Read the Bible, Please?

My kindergartener, Ethan, loves to read his Bible. He comes into my room in the morning asking, “Mommy, can you read me a story from the Bible?” His Bible is written as a children’s storybook with colorful illustrations and animated characters. Whether the story is “David and Goliath” or “Jesus Feeds Thousands,” Ethan’s attention is sharply fixed on each page. After one story has ended, he wants another, then another.

I sometimes wish I had this same kind of hunger and enthusiasm when I approach my Bible. I’d like to read it with fresh eyes like my son’s. Instead of knowing how things turn out, what if I read a story about Jesus and wondered, *What’s going to happen? Is Jesus really going to walk on water? How did He do that?*

If you’re not careful, Bible study can become a chore, something to check off a “to-do” list and nothing more. Anyone can become numb to the miraculous stories and truths found in God’s Word. After sharing a parable in Mark 7, Jesus says to His closest followers, “Are you so dull?” (Mark 7:18). Even the disciples who walked with Jesus experienced times of spiritual blindness.

Reading the Bible is a fundamental component to living your best life, yet so many people have forgotten the fun—the life—that’s found in studying God’s Word. So how do you put the fun back into the fundamentals of Bible study?

Pray first. Before you begin reading, take a moment to ask God to help you comprehend and apply what you read, that “the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe” (Ephesians 1:18-19).

Personalize it. When you read an Old Testament story, put yourself in the picture. What if you instead of Daniel were thrown inside the lion’s den? How would you feel when the morning came and you were still alive? You can also insert your name into a passage: “[Mary] be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Put it into practice. If you love to play basketball, it’s enjoyable to watch

a game on television but not nearly as fun as suiting up and playing yourself. Likewise, you can sit on the sidelines, observing the truths found in the Bible. But until you put what you read into practice, you're not fully realizing the positive power of God's Word in your life. Take a passage of Scripture and ask God how to apply it to your life.

Here's a beauty tip that illustrates what reading the Bible will do for you. To give your makeup a firm base, splash your face with cold water before applying makeup. This helps shrink pores temporarily and helps makeup glide on seamlessly.

When you read your Bible, it's like splashing cold, refreshing water on your face. It cleanses your life of imperfections. It shrinks not your pores but your problems. It gives you fresh energy for the day. When you apply makeup, it helps your outward appearance. But applying God's Word dramatically improves your inward appearance where true beauty begins.

I may be too old to sit in a first-grade classroom, but I'm young enough at heart to have fun doing the fundamentals, and so are you.

Thought for Rejuvenation

Think back to a time when Bible study was especially meaningful to you. Maybe you were studying a particular book, using a study guide, or looking for answers during a difficult time of life. What were you doing that worked well?

Act of eXpression

Do something today to make your Bible study come alive. Here are a few ideas:

- Read the Bible with a notepad. Write your thoughts about a few passages and how they apply to your life.

- Pray a few Scriptures out loud, inserting your name when appropriate.
- Listen to an audio Bible on CD or your computer.
- Take your Bible to a quiet place outside and read in a different environment than usual.