

The Editors of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible summarized 2 Kings 2:23-25 by saying “Elisha is Jeered.” I think it would have been more appropriate to say, “Don’t jeer Elisha.” I find this passage fascinating: “From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. *“Get out of here, baldy!” they said. “Get out of here, baldy!” He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria.*” Why do you suppose it was necessary to include this in the Bible unless it was an early admonition not to bully.

Equally fascinating to me is the passage from Psalm 104:25-26: *“Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.”* The frivolity of creation seems to be the message. I sometimes wonder why God created opossums – maybe it was for the fun of it.

These two are random examples of how scripture might speak to you just because the passage was so completely unexpected.

There are many times that I will sit in Church and hear a reading and think to myself, I don’t think I’ve ever read that passage before. Although I have heard it, there is something that day that is causing me to hear it in a way that I had never imagined.

Scripture is God’s way of continuing to speak to us today. We are blessed to hear God’s words in ways that we may never have heard them or considered them. For this reason, we are called as Christians to continually study and reflect upon the Holy Scriptures.

One of my transformational experiences in life was reading a scripture passage aloud during a worship service. I read, *“I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For*

*this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him."*

When I read these words during worship it was as if I was reading them for the first time. I read "a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois" – my grandmother's name was Lois (that got my attention). I read Paul's invitation: "join with me in suffering for the gospel." And finally, I heard Paul's words "But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust".

It was this entire passage that made me realize that I called myself a Christian but I was just Christian when convenient. I had made no sacrifices. I don't know if I truly trusted. This scripture indicted me and made me re-think my life and my callings. Within a year of reading this passage, I quit practicing law and was making my way to seminary. Other affirming things happened along this way, but scripture was the beginning of this process for me.

There are an infinite number of ways to study the Bible. Many start with Genesis and attempt to read the Bible from beginning to end. Some start with the Gospels. You can randomly open your Bible. There are various books and meditations. We are doing it during these forty days with what are seemingly random passages.

One interesting way I heard of recently was to read the red letters of the Gospels. That is just to read Jesus' words. There is a site online that highlights Jesus' words in red letters like many bound bibles. You can begin with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and then John and read the red letter sections of these Gospels.

Whatever you do, it is important to read the Bible because this is one of the many ways that God continues to speak to us.