

The Other Side of the Bookshelf



One of my core memories growing up was waking up early on weekday mornings to watch cartoons. I grew up in the 80s—long before Netflix, YouTube, or streaming services—so the options were pretty limited. Most mornings it was *G.I. Joe* or reruns of *Popeye*. To make things even more interesting, the cartoons were all in Spanish because my family lived in South America, where my parents served as missionaries.

I don't remember much about the cartoons. The entertainment value wasn't that great. However, what I do remember is what happened on the *other* side of the room.

Our living room was divided by a pair of bookshelves. Every morning, while my brother and I sat in front of the television, my dad would be on the other side of those shelves spending 45 minutes to an hour reading God's Word and praying. Sometimes I'd lose interest in whatever cartoon was on and wander over to where he was. I'd see him read Scripture and hear him

pray—for our family, for the ministry God had entrusted to my parents, and for people who didn't yet know Christ.

Looking back, I couldn't tell you the plot of a single cartoon episode. However, I can still picture countless mornings seeing my dad on his knees with an open Bible, talking with God. That image shaped me far more than any television show ever could. The daily investment my dad made to engage with God's Word has left an imprint on my life and on my family's life that continues to this day.

Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing", John 15:5 (NIV).

Looking back over my own life, the practice that has shaped me more than any other as a husband, dad, pastor, friend, and co-worker has been learning to abide with Christ through His Word. I'll be honest—I'm not as disciplined as my dad was, and I still miss mornings from time to time. Yet over the years, consistently opening my Bible and trusting the Holy Spirit to use God's Word to mold and shape me has produced fruit that I could never have manufactured on my own.

The cartoons are long forgotten, but the picture of my dad on his knees with an open Bible still lives vividly in my mind. It's a picture that reminds me over and over again of the greatest investment we can make, abiding with Christ through engaging with His Word.



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