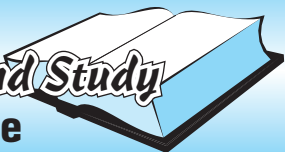


How to *Read and Study* the Bible



“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1-3).

I have hope for the worst man, as long as he will read his Bible. I feel sure he will turn to God someday. I am full of fear for the best man, if he neglects his Bible. He is almost certain to fall before the enemy. In these last, perilous days, there is no safeguard but the Word of God.

FOLLOW SOME GOOD METHODS

Two men have given good advice about studying the Bible. Mr. Moody said, “For a number of years I have made it a rule not to read any book that does not help me to understand the Bible. I am a greater slave to that book than any man is to strong drink, and it does me a great deal more good.

“Every Christian ought to have a good Bible – not so good that you are afraid to mark it – and a concordance. I think I have the key to the study of the Bible. Take it topically. Take *Love*, and spend a month in searching what the Bible says about love, from Genesis to Revelation. Then you will love everybody whether they love you or not. In the same way take *Grace, Faith, Assurance, Heaven*, and so on. When you read your Bible be sure you hunt for something. Spend six months studying Genesis, it is the seed-plant of the Bible. Read the same chapter over and over again until you understand it. If we know our Bibles, Satan will not have much power over us.”

I would add, make yourself thoroughly familiar with Paul’s Epistles. They are the key to all the Holy Scripture. Do not think you would do better with a commentary. They are useful to consult sometimes. But it is better for you to be without one, than that you should depend on one. Get a reference Bible, if possible, and you will find the best commentary in the margin.

Another suggests this plan: “Begin with the Old Testament and read a chapter. The next time you read, begin with the New in the same way. The next time, a chapter of the Old, beginning where you left off before; and the next time again, a chapter of the New. You will soon get through the New; then begin it again; and so with the Old. The result will be you will increasingly love the Word of God. I have tried this plan for forty-six years,

and though I have read the blessed Word of God nearly one hundred times, I never get tired of it. The more I read it, the more precious it becomes to my heart, the more delight I take in reading it. It is always a new book to me.

“Bible reading is the great means of nourishing the soul. If you neglect this, you will never make much progress. Do not be discouraged if, on your first reading, you do not understand. Little by little you will learn more.”

I suggest further a plan which for some years I have found very profitable. It is the adoption of two methods. **First**, continue reading straight on through the Bible from beginning to the end. About two pages a day, in an ordinary sized Bible, will bring you through in a year. But read more than this, if you have time; and as years roll by you will be tempted to read more and more. In this way you will get a general knowledge of the entire Scriptures. You will notice the scope and main object of each book. You will see that there is a Divine order in the arrangement of the books. Try as you go on to see the predominating topic of each book; and observe how “the New (Testament) is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New revealed.”

Second, make a special study of one book. Take for example, one of Paul’s Epistles. Read it through several times, till you see the outline of it, and understand the line of thought, and the steps of argument, or the main divisions of the book. This

will be time well spent. Then when you have grasped the general subject of the book, begin at the first chapter, and take it verse by verse, and word by word, searching out parallel texts and words in the Old and New Testaments, observing how one part of the Bible explains another part.

SOME GENERAL GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS:

1. Seek the guidance and instruction of the Holy Spirit before starting.
2. Recognize that Bible study is hard work requiring time, effort and concentration. “The soul of the sluggard desires and has nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat” (Prov. 13:4).
3. Read the passage through twice: using two different translations if possible.
4. Write down each reference to God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit with a brief thought to each reference.
5. List the people mentioned and what is said about each one.
6. Write down at least three key teachings of this passage. Does any one seem to be the most prominent? Why?
7. Choose a key verse of the passage and explain your choice.
8. Make an outline of the passage, using at least three general headings with sub-points under each.

9. Write out a practical application to your own life from this passage such as:

A command to obey
An example to follow
A promise to claim
A teaching to learn, etc.

By following these methods you will be surprised how your interest in Scripture, and love for its pages, will increase. You will make it the center of all your reading.

APPROACH BIBLE WITH RIGHT ATTITUDE

It is well to schedule a time in the day for Bible reading. What is left to be done at any time is usually never done at all. Keep to your schedule diligently.

Always pray before you read. Ask God to be your teacher, to enlighten the eyes of your heart by His Holy Spirit. If Bezaleel needed to be “filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge,” that he might know how to construct the tabernacle, how much more do we need the fullness of the same Holy Spirit, that we may understand the wonderful things of revealed truth.

Be sure you read your Bible with faith, believing every word. Remember that “these are the true sayings of God.” “The Scripture cannot be broken.” Never doubt your heavenly Father’s word (see 1 John 5:10). Have no thoughts or

opinions of your own, but like a little child receive the Word of God in simple trust. Let no feeling of your own unworthiness make you stagger at the rich fullness and freeness of God's promises.

Let your object in knowing the Word of God be, that you may do the will of God. If you have sin upon your conscience, it will hinder your understanding. Live out faithfully in your daily life all you learn. Think of the connection between the laying aside and the laying apart with the desiring and receiving in 1 Peter 2:1-2, and James 1:21. No one who allows sin in his life can know the truth in his heart. But "if anyone wills to do His will, he shall know," says the Lord in John 7:17.

It is good sometimes to sit or kneel before God, and meditate and ponder over some portion of the Word of Truth. Speak with God about it; praise Him for it; ask Him to fulfill it all in you. Remember that in prayer you are speaking to God; and in reading the Bible, God is speaking to you. Let your listening heart say, "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears." Pause, and think over some blessed text, and allow your soul to drink in all its rich and precious meaning. When the Psalmist speaks of the downward course of the wicked, the contrast he draws between them and the righteous man is very striking – "But," he says, "his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

A spot upon your conscience will be like a speck upon your eye. If you are indeed a child of

God, it will not only be painful to you, it will almost blind you. So confess it at once to God and take sides with Him against it. Then walking in the truth, you will be able to understand the truth, and the truth will sanctify you (John 17:17).

GROWING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

I earnestly urge you to make Bible-reading your daily habit. Let it be a fixed principle with you that you need "the words of His mouth" for your soul's nourishment and health, "more than [your] necessary food" (Job 23:12). "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). I have seen many young Christians fall away for lack of this.

You have found forgiveness, young believer, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ; and you are happy. But forgiveness, blessed as it is, is not food. And if you have no food you will have no strength. If you are hungry you are liable to eat anything. The hungry prodigal, when away from his father's table tried to satisfy his hunger with the husks the swine ate.

If you do not go on, applying yourself to the careful reading of your Bible, increasing in the knowledge of Christ, your famished soul will readily turn to eat of the world's dainties, and Satan will spread them temptingly before you. But they will not satisfy your immortal soul. But if you are nourished by the hidden manna; if, searching the Scriptures, your soul is filled with the

knowledge and love of Christ Jesus your Lord, you will “never hunger.”

“And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst’ (John 6:35). If you will keep feeding on the Lord as He is revealed in the Word of God, your “soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness” (Psalm 63:5), and the vain empty things the world is feeding on will have no appeal to you.

Christian, if you would stand before the enemy, if you would walk humbly and happily with your God, if you would be useful in the Lord’s vineyard, search the Scriptures daily and diligently. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

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