

Reading God's Word

The Problems We Face Today

The challenge that many Christians face today is the struggle to develop a consistent discipline and approach to reading the Bible.

- We may have a hard time understanding the Bible and therefore we don't read it regularly. We don't know why it is important.
- Reading the Bible has become a boring routine, just another thing we feel we have to do for conscience sake.
- We don't really know how to read the Bible and often we are just jumping around in the Bible without a plan or a purpose.
- We know we should read the Bible, but we don't make time to do it. We make excuses and convince ourselves that we don't need to or that other things are more important.

These problems are common to most believers. Many have overcome them and so can you.

Lesson Truth

The Word of God in the Bible is the spiritual food by which the Holy Spirit in us thrives on and thereby transforms our lives. Apart from a consistent intake of the Word, we will wander away from the truth and will begin to forget whose we are.

Lesson Goal

The goal for this lesson is for you to develop a consistent approach to feeding your spiritual life so you can grow spiritually through reading your Bible regularly.

Lesson Discussion

The Bread of Life



Matthew 4:4 ESV "But He answered, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."'"

Many believers want to grow spiritually and they desire a deeper walk with God. We want to grow spiritually but do we really know what that looks like or how to truly experience spiritual growth. When a baby is fed, it grows. If it is not fed it does not grow. Just as bread is food for our natural life, the Word of God is food for our spiritual life.



John 6:35ESV "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.'"

John 1:14 ESV "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Jesus says in the above verse "I am the bread of life". He was talking about spiritual bread. Jesus was also referred to as the "word" that became flesh in the first chapter of John. When we read God's word we take in the bread of life, the bread that gives life. That is what feeds our spirit and brings about spiritual growth. Apart from that we become spiritually malnourished.

The Bible is not just a book of spiritual sayings and wisdom, it is God Himself and it is through our relationship with the Son that we can partake of and grow in the Word. The Bible is the living Word that feeds and nourishes the spirit. That is how we grow spiritually and spiritual growth is simply becoming more like Jesus.

There are many ideas about spiritual growth, but once you are born again of the spirit, it is the

bread of God that will bring spiritual growth – feeding on His Word. As you get more of the Word of Life in you, your life becomes more like His life. The true measure of spiritual growth is walking as He walked.



1 John 2:5-6 ESV “But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

When we eat we are nourished and live. When we don't eat we become malnourished and die. Are you feeding your spirit or starving your spirit? Is your life more like the world or more like Jesus? Taking the Word of God into your life daily must be among your top priorities for the day. Many things will press in to convince you that you do not need to or that you do not have time to read God's word.

Faith Comes By the Word



Romans 10:17 ESV “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

One aspect of growing spiritually is growing in our faith. As you can see faith comes through hearing the Word of God. How do you know if you have faith or how much faith you have? Watch your actions and speech next time your faith is challenged by circumstance of life.

Faith is not known until it is tested. A crisis will reveal whether you have faith or not. If fear or worry show up, guess what? You now see what faith you have. Want more faith? Feed your faith with the Word. Being faithless comes from being Wordless.

How does the Word bring faith? Faith has to do with believing and trusting God. If you

don't really know God, you are not going to put your faith and trust in someone you don't know. When the storm comes you fall apart because you don't really believe or trust God. The lessons on believing, faith, and trusting will help you in this area.

As you read God's Word you start to know God personally and your confidence in Him begins to grow. You begin to believe that you can trust Him and your faith in Him becomes stronger. That is how we grow in faith. The stronger your faith, the less worry and fear you will have in your life.

The Word is Our Owner's Manual

When you get a new car you get an owner's manual. The owner's manual has all the information you need to operate the car in the way it was designed. It tells you how to care of the car and what the different warning lights mean when there is a problem.

The Bible is the owner's manual for our spiritual life. It is the standard that God has given us so we can live in the way He created us for. It tells us how to live our lives, how to care for our lives, and what the warning lights mean when something is wrong in our life.

When you drive a new car and have not read the owner's manual because you have driven other cars, you might be in for a surprise. If you are caring for the car based on what someone else said because they have a car too, you might end up in trouble. You read the owner's manual for yourself and learn for yourself what it says about your car.

Warning lights are a very good thing in a car. If we ignore a warning in the car we are putting ourselves and others at risk. The Bible is full of warnings and guidance on how to live this life God has given us. Ignorance of God's standard and the way He has established for us puts us and others in risk of spiritual shipwreck and risk to our lives.

Our life can never look like the life of Jesus if we don't know what that life looks like and

don't know how to become like Him. The Bible provides that for us when we line our lives up with the truths in the Word of God. Learn God's Word for yourself and live by it.

The Bible is a Spiritual Book



1 Corinthians 2:14 ESV "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

The Bible is not like a dictionary or history book or any other book on the planet. It is divinely inspired and certain teachings in the Bible must be spiritually discerned. This means if you don't have the Holy Spirit, there will be much in the Bible you will never understand because it is the Holy Spirit that opens our eyes to spiritual truth.

The Bible has a lot of history and wise sayings that most people can understand. Many believe that Jesus was just a good teacher who went around do good and got himself killed. You can read these things in the Bible. But you will never really know who Jesus was apart from the Holy Spirit and you will miss much of what He taught because they were spiritual truths.

The Word of God is supernatural food that keeps our spirit alive because it nourishes the life of the Son of God in us. As we read God's word regularly and live according to it, our lives will become more like His life.



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How the Bible is Organized

The largest part of the Bible is the Old Testament. It is a compilation of many early Jewish writings about how God was at work in the world before the life of Jesus. These writings were carefully and faithfully transcribed and passed down through the generations by Jewish scribes.

The primary purpose of the Old Testament was to point us to and prepare us for the coming of the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Messiah, the Christ. There are many prophecies in the Old Testament telling about the coming of the Christ.

The Old Testament also has many of the popular and loved stories such as Noah and the Arc, Daniel in the lion's den, Adam and Eve and many other accounts which demonstrated how God was working on behalf of His people. The Psalms and Proverbs are spiritually encouraging and give us a glimpse of God's wisdom and character.

The next major part of the Bible is the New Testament. The first section of the New Testament is comprised of the four Gospels. The four Gospels were written by four different authors and captured the life and teachings of Jesus from that author's specific experience with Jesus. Some of the same accounts are in every gospel because all four authors were given insight into that particular event.

The four Gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These are teachings you will want to read over and over again so that every teaching of Jesus is familiar to you. The gospels help us to understand what it means to be a disciple and follower of Jesus.

The remainder of the New Testament (Acts through Revelation) is comprised of letters written by the early disciples. These letters help us understand how to live the Christian life in a practical way and they are based on the teachings and commands of Jesus in the four Gospels.

How Should I Read the Bible?

Start reading the Bible by reading a chapter a day in the gospels until you have read through all four gospels. Then begin reading them through again and again. This is a discipline you will want to keep up for the rest of your life. It won't be too long before you will know every story and every teaching.

After a few months, begin also reading a chapter in the letters. Read through all the letters and then start again. You should now be reading a chapter in the gospels and a chapter in the letters. After a few years you will be amazed at how much God's word you will know. You will be able to discern spiritual error in books, sermons and at bible studies.

You will also want to add readings in the Old Testament in addition to the New Testament. You can work this in any way you want. Many teachings and events in the New Testament will make more sense after you have read the Old Testament. You might want to start by reading the Proverbs or Psalms.

Just remember, you don't need to understand everything you are reading in the Bible. The goal is to let the Holy Spirit teach you what He wants you to know so you can begin living what He is teaching you. When the time is right, the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to things that you never saw before each time you read back through the Word.

What Translation Should I Read?

It is not so important what translation you read, but that you spend time daily in the Word. Many people prefer the New International Version. Other folks think the King James is the only version you should read. I like the English Standard Version and the King James.

Along with translations there are also paraphrased Bibles. A paraphrase is different than a translation. A paraphrase, such as the Good News Bible, is rephrased by the author to be simpler and easier to understand. The words in a paraphrase are not direct translations from the original language.

Some translations have tried to make the Word align with current culture saying that it is more relevant. I prefer translations that are as close to the original as possible. That is why I prefer King James and English Standard Version. There are also literal translations that provide even closer ties to the original.

The Amplified Bible can provide more clarity on what a passage is saying and Parallel bibles show the gospels aligned next to each other. If you already have a bible, just start with that one. The most important thing is to develop a daily habit of reading.

The amount of Biblical information and the number of sites offering teaching on the Internet can be overwhelming. Just remember that the most important thing is to be in your Bible daily. Books, videos, and teachings about the bible are far less important than reading your Bible every day. Those other things can be helpful if they are done in addition to reading your Bible every day. "You Version" is a very popular bible reading application for computers and smart phones.

The Bible as God's Mirror



James 1:23-24 ESV "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like."

Reading and studying the Bible is not about accumulating Bible knowledge. What God is really after in your life is that you are living your life according to his teachings and commands. The end goal is for your life to look more and more like the life of Jesus.

If we are only hearers and readers of the Word and not doers of the Word, it will benefit us nothing. The Bible says if you only listen to the Word of God and not obey it, you deceive yourself. You may think you are living Christian

because you know the word but in reality you are not.

A true Christian is one who lives Christian by choosing to obey what Jesus taught and commanded. You can think of the Bible as a mirror. When you look into a mirror you see yourself as you really are, not what you think you look like. You can't escape the truth of what the mirror is showing you.

When you look into a mirror you might not like what you see. A mirror simply shows you the truth about yourself, whether you like it or not – it cannot lie. Some things you cannot change very easily, while other things you can change quite easily.

In the same way, the Bible brings us face to face with our true spiritual character - our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. When we look into the mirror of God's truth, we see what we really are, not what we think we are. Often we will not like what we see in God's mirror. But when we see ourselves as we really are, we then have the choice of changing what we are or staying the same. If we stay the same we stagnate spiritually and end up shipwrecked.

The Holy Spirit will use God's Word as a mirror to show you what God wants you to be and what you need to change. Are you going to obey? If we do not intend to live as God says we should live, we should not think we will escape the consequences. But if we obey, we will be blessed.



James 1:25 ESV “But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”

As we live in faith and obedience to God's standard our lives will produce fruit for God and we will experience the wonderful fruit of the Spirit such as love, joy, peace, patience and self control.



John 14:23-24 ESV “Jesus answered him, ‘If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.’”

The storms of life will most definitely come in one form or another. If the foundation of your life is built on hearing and obeying God's word you will be able to weather any storm of life.



Luke 6:47-49 ESV “Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

The Bible Reveals Satan's Lies

Over the years, all of us have unwittingly accumulated lies and untruths that have rooted themselves in our subconscious. Many of these are still present after we have been born again. These are things that we have accepted as true, but they are not. Often we are not aware of these lies and unbelief that are still residing in our memory and thinking.

A lie is simply something that sounds true, seems true, and you are convinced that it is true, but it is really false. Think about something in your life that you absolutely believed was true but later found it was not.

Before we were saved our lives were programmed over many years with lots of lies and unbelief. Some of these became obvious to us when we were saved, yet other lies and

unbelief are still tucked away in our minds. The Holy Spirit will show us these as we continue in the Word.

The Word of God is the mirror of truth that shows us these remaining lies and unbelief by bringing us face to face with the truth of God. Only the truth can reveal untruth. Unless you learn the truth and turn from the lie to the truth, you will continue to live according to the lie.

Your actions, words, attitudes, behaviors and emotions are driven by your beliefs. If all of your beliefs are right, pure, honest, and God honoring, you are living by the truth. Anything other than that indicates lie based beliefs that are still rooted in your life that the Holy Spirit will show you.

The way we can identify and deal with lies and unbelief in our life is to become so familiar with the truth, that lies and unbelief can no longer hide in our subconscious. The way we do this is by reading God's truth regularly.

God's truth will begin to expose the lies and unbelief in our mind so we can choose to believe the truth and live according to it instead of living according to the lie. Godly character is developed as we learn God's truth and then discipline ourselves to live in obedience to it.

As we engage in regular reading of the Word, the Holy Spirit will expose the lies and unbelief we are still harboring. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through our conscience and will show us when our behavior, attitude or thinking is out of order with God's Word.



One Step for Living This Truth

Next we will suggest the specific action step you can take to allow this lesson's truth to be lived in your own personal life. You only have to do this one step to master this lesson.

Your focus and effort should be to make sure you consistently and persistently do the one step as directed below. You must discipline yourself to read God's Word daily so you can stay strong in the faith and to keep His truth in the forefront of your life.

ACTION STEP

You must develop and maintain a disciplined approach to reading God's word. If you are not already doing so, start by reading at least one chapter a day in the gospels.

If you are already reading a chapter regularly and have been doing that consistently for at least 3 months, add a chapter in the letters to your daily reading. This means you are reading a chapter every day in the gospels and the letters.

You can read whatever you want in addition to this, but do not neglect reading the gospels and letters daily. You will be amazed at the spiritual change in your life and how your relationship with Jesus will improve.

As you are reading the word, the Holy Spirit will show you things about yourself and God. He will show you gaps in your spiritual character that he expects you to give attention to. Do not ignore or neglect what he shows you.

You will have completed this lesson when you are consistently reading the gospels and letters every day. Even if you skip a few days make sure you pick back up and not let Satan convince you that it is not a big deal, because it is a big deal to God. If you find yourself beginning to slack off in your reading, come back and read this lesson again.

Bumper Sticker Summary

Make time to read God's Word daily. You will not find time so you must make time. You will starve spiritually if you do feed on the bread of life daily. If you want to be closer to God, if you want to grow spiritually, there is only one way – the bread of life.

Additional Scriptures

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Hebrews 4:12 ESV "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Psalms 119:105 ESV "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Psalms 119:9 ESV "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word."

Psalms 119:11 ESV "I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

Psalms 119:16 ESV "I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word."

Psalms 119:74 ESV "Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice, because I have hoped in your word."

Psalms 119:89 ESV "Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens."

Psalms 119:101 ESV "I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word."

Psalms 119:103 ESV "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Psalms 119:130 ESV "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple."

Psalms 119:133 ESV "Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me."

Psalms 119:160 ESV "The sum of your words is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever."

Ezekiel 33:31 ESV "And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain."

John 17:17 ESV "Sanctify them in truth; your word is truth."

James 1:22 ESV "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

2 Peter 1:19 ESV "And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,"

Luke 24:45 ESV "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,"

John 5:39 ESV "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,"

Acts 17:2 ESV "And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,"

Acts 18:28 ESV "For he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus."

Romans 15:4 ESV "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

2 Peter 3:16 ESV “As he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.”

2 Timothy 3:15 ESV “and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Acts 17:11 ESV “Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

Psalms 1:1-2 ESV “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”

Psalms 30:5 ESV “For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.”

Psalms 12:6 ESV “The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.”