

How To Read The Bible (In English & Original Languages)

The Word of God is necessary and profitable not only for beginners and little ones but also for the most advanced and spiritual believers here upon earth. . . . This is evident from the following:

First, it is the only means instituted by God to faith and conversion. Without the Word none shall believe. “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:14, 17). Apart from the Word no one can be regenerated. “Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth” (James 1:18); “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23).

Secondly, the Word of God is the food which nurtures the spiritual life of the converted: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). Since many persons use the Word so infrequently, they are in darkness, unsteady, tossed to and fro by all winds of doctrine, live in sorrow, suffer from weak faith, and experience the hiding of God’s countenance.

Thirdly, the Word of God is the only rule whereby the condition of our hearts, thoughts, words, and deeds should be governed. “And as many as walk according to this rule” (Galatians 6:16); “To the law and to the testimony” (Isaiah 8:20); “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Thy commandments” (Psalm 119:6). If people neglect to retain the Word of God in mind and heart, they will begin to elevate their own intellect as their Bible, and thus will mislead themselves and be a cause for concern to others. Such neglect will result in a sinful life as well as much backsliding. Yes, many who do not establish the Word of God as their rule of life “will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24).

Fourthly, the Word of God provides a steadfast comfort. “That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4); “Unless Thy law had been my delights; for they are the rejoicing of my heart” (Psalm 119:92, 111). This comfort which originates from the Word may come while reading or hearing it or during prayer and meditation. It may originate from a text of Scripture or when the soul, while engaged in sweet exercise, is directed to a text. Such comfort is generally of a much deeper and more fundamental nature, and more steadfast and durable than the comfort which the soul receives without any reflection upon the Word. . . . It is therefore desirable to read or hear the Bible read frequently so that one may have ready access to a supply of Scripture in time of need. Furthermore, while meditating, texts of Scripture may be impressed upon the heart to the comfort of the soul[.] . . .

Fifthly, the Word is a special means for sanctification. “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” (John 17:7). God’s Word does not only work sanctification by means of continual exhortation by which the soul is inclined towards obedience by the very voice of God. It also works sanctification through a continual dialogue with God Himself while hearing, reading, and meditating upon His Word as the believer seeks to regulate his life by means of the Word. In addition to this the soul will be more exercised in faith and will become more established in the truth by virtue of its consistent use of God’s Word. Faith then gives birth to love, and love in turn to sanctification. Yes, the soul is led further in this way into the mysteries of God’s Word and perceives many matters which it previously was not able to discern. Every new acquaintance with spiritual mysteries,

however, as well as each mystery itself, has a sanctifying influence. Those who are remiss in reading and lax in acquainting themselves with God's Word will be deprived to a considerable degree of these blessed fruits.

Sixthly, the Word of God is the spiritual sword which must be wielded at all times in our battle against the devil, heresies, and our flesh (Ephesians 6:17); "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Those who stand ready with this sword stand firm, provide themselves protection, and are victorious over their enemies.

Seventhly, to state matters comprehensively, the Word of God is the only means whereby we can be saved. "It is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16); "The gospel of your salvation" (Ephesians 1:13); "The engrafted Word, which is able to save your soul" (James 1:21). Therefore, whoever desires salvation will esteem and acknowledge the Word of God as necessary and profitable and will be desirous for this Word. . . .

Since we have shown the Word to have all these qualities, it obligates everyone to the following.

First, man must acknowledge, value, believe, and view the Word of God in this manner. Apart from this, the Word shall not be profitable. "The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith" (Hebrews 4:2). . . . [E]veryone [ought] to bring [his] thoughts into obedient captivity to the Word of God, nipping all wrong impulses in the bud, lest by permitting such thoughts to be multiplied the soul will become more distraught. . . .

Secondly, men ought to rejoice wholeheartedly in this most precious gift of God, embrace it with much love, and be joyful whenever they may either behold it or hold it in their very hands. . . . We . . . may have it in our possession and may hear and read it. How our hearts ought to rejoice over this fact! "I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. O how love I Thy law!" (Ps 119:14, 97); "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10).

Thirdly, we should thank and magnify the Lord, who has given it for this. "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments" (Psalm 119:62); "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel" (Psalm 147:12,19).

Fourthly, make use of the Word of God in prosperity, adversity, darkness, seasons of doubt, times of perplexity, and your entire walk. Nothing can befall you, nor is there any duty in which you must engage where the Word of God would not provide you with comfort, peace, counsel, and direction. "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors; I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me; Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path; Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart" (Psalm 119:24, 30, 105, 111).

Fifthly, purchase this inestimable jewel, and be diligent in giving it a place in your home. . . . One of the most appropriate acts of mercy is to provide the poor with Bibles, and to question them frequently whether they are also reading them daily. . . . Those who are not able to read must exert every effort to learn, with the objective to be able to read the Word of God. A home without a Bible is a ship without a rudder and a Christian without a Bible is a soldier without a weapon. . . .

Sixthly, read, search, and meditate upon the Word of God with all diligence and persistence. This should even be the practice of kings. “And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life” (Deuteronomy 17:19). It is the duty of scholars as well. “Give attendance to reading” (1 Timothy 4:13). It is the privilege and obligation of the lowly and of every individual. “Search the Scriptures” (John 5:39); “Have ye not read?” (Matthew 12:3).

The eunuch read while riding in his chariot (Acts 8:28). The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). How everyone ought to practice this in private, prior to going to work, both by himself alone, and with his family! At noon when one nourishes his body, he ought also to nourish his soul. In the evening after work, one must end the day by seeking some refreshment from the Word of God. In the meantime, while engaged to understand the spiritual meaning as well as experience the power of God’s Word. This will cause the soul to grow in grace, prevent vain thoughts from arising, control the tongue, suppress corruptions, and direct man to fear God. . . .

For the reading of Scripture to be profitable, there must be preparation, practice, and reflection. . . . Each time when one engages himself to read:

(1) He must, with mental concentration, place himself in the presence of God. He must promote a reverent, spiritual frame, being conscious that the Lord shall speak to him. The consciousness of that reality should cause us to tremble with holy reverence. To promote such reverence, reflect upon Isaiah 1:2, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.”

(2) He must lift up his heart to the Lord, beseeching Him who is the Author of this Word for His Spirit, that He may cause us to perceive the truth expressed in God’s Word and apply it to the heart. Our prayer ought to be with Ps 119:18, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.”

(3) He must also attentively incline the heart to obedience in order to exercise faith, be receptive to comfort, and comply with all that which the Lord shall proclaim, promise, and command, saying, “speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:9). . . .

As you read, it is essential to do so calmly and attentively rather than to do it hastily with the objective of bringing the exercise of this duty to a conclusion. . . . [W]ith a humble, hungry, and submissive spiritual frame, one places himself before the Lord while reading slowly and thoughtfully as if hearing the voice of God, and subjecting himself to the Holy Spirit to operate upon the heart as he reads. . . . Whenever there is a passage which has a special power upon the heart, such a person pauses in order that this Scripture might have its effect in the heart. Then he prays, gives thanks, rejoices, and is filled with amazement—all of which revive the soul and stimulate it to obedience. Upon concluding these exercises he will continue reading. After having read a chapter, he will meditate upon it, time permitting. When he encounters a remarkable text, he will mark or memorize it. In such a fashion both the learned and the unlearned should read the Word of God. In so doing, one will understand its spiritual meaning with increasing clarity and God’s Word will increasingly become more precious to us. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God” (John 7:17); “If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). . . .

[R]eflection upon reading Scripture consists in[:]

(1) joyfully giving thanks that the Lord has permitted His Word to be recorded, that we may have it in our homes, that we can and were privileged to read it, and that it was applied to our heart;

(2) painstakingly striving to preserve this good spiritual frame which is obtained by reading God's Word;

(3) meditating while engaged in one's occupation upon that which one has read, repeatedly seeking to focus his thoughts upon it;

(4) sharing with others what was read, whenever possible, and discussing it;

(5) especially striving to comply with what was read by bringing it into practice.

If the Holy Scriptures were used in such a fashion, what wondrous progress we would make in both knowledge and godliness! Children would soon become young men, and young men would soon become men in Christ Jesus.¹

¹

Pgs. 72-81, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, by Wilhelmus á Brakel, vol. 1.