"HOW TO BENEFIT FROM YOUR DEVOTIONS EVERY TIME"

(Part 1 - How to continually gain blessings from your Bible Reading)

3/17/2013



INTRODUCTION: Not everyone can understand the Bible. You must meet certain requirements, conditions, prerequisites before you can gain maximum benefit from reading your Bible.

I. A <u>BELIEVING</u> MIND
. . . to <u>understand</u> God's Word (I Thes. 2:13)

II. A <u>TENDER</u> HEART
. . . to <u>accept and apply</u> God's Word (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23)

III. A <u>SUBMISSIVE</u> SPIRIT
. . . to <u>obey</u> God's Word (James 1:21-25)

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Three Conditions:
--A Believing Mind
--A Tender Heart
--A Submissive Spirit

I. A BELIEVING MIND . . . to understand God's Word (I Thes. 2:13)

A. You must believe in the SAVIOR
(You must be saved - I Cor. 2:6-16)

1. To understand a spiritual Book,
you must be spiritual (I Cor. 2:6-15)

a. An unsaved person generally has no desire to understand
("they are foolishness unto him" - v. 14)

b. An unsaved person has no ability to understand
("neither can he know them" - v. 14b)

2. To understand a spiritual Book,
you must know the Author (I Cor. 2:16)
"We have the mind of Christ."

B. You must believe in the SCRIPTURE
(You must have a right view of Scripture - II Tim. 3:16)

1. You must believe in the inspiration of the Bible (v. 16a)
The Bible is God-breathed.

2. You must believe in the authority of the Bible (v. 16b)
The Bible tells me what to believe and how to live.

II. A TENDER HEART . . . to accept and apply God's Word (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23)

The Sower = A messenger of God
The Seed = The Word of God
The Soil = The heart of man

Which type of soil characterizes your heart?

A. HARD - Hearted (v. 4, 19)
***This soil characterizes the rebellious man** (one who does not want to hear it at all).

B. FAINT - Hearted (v. 5-6, 20-21)
***This soil characterizes the non-committed man** (one who is emotionally interested but not committed).

C. HALF - Hearted (v. 7, 22)
***This soil characterizes the easily distracted man** (one who is preoccupied, other things are more important).

D. WHOLE - Hearted (v. 8, 23)
***This soil characterizes the tender man** (one who has a sincere and good heart - Luke 8:15).

III. A SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT

. . . to obey God's Word (James 1:21-25)

The Word of God is shown in verses 19-27 by 3 figures:
1) as seed "implanted" (v. 21)
2) as a mirror (v. 23)
3) as a Law of Liberty (v. 25)

To gain the most from your personal devotions, follow God's three steps to beneficial Bible reading:

A. First,
REMOVE SINFUL HINDRANCES (v. 21a)
(The Obstacles)

B. Second,
READ WITH A TEACHABLE ATTITUDE (v. 21b)
(Openness)

C. Third,
RESPOND WITH OBEDIENT ACTION (v. 22-25)
(Observance)

1. The foolishness of the "hearer only" (v. 22-24)

   a. They are self-deceived readers (v. 22)

   b. They are careless readers (v. 23-24a)

   c. They are forgetful readers (v. 24b)

2. The faithfulness of the "doer" (v. 25)

   a. He is a serious reader ("looketh into")

   b. He is a steady reader ("continueth therein")

   c. He is a submissive reader ("a doer of the work")

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INTRODUCTION: Not everyone can understand the Bible.
You must meet certain requirements, conditions, prerequisites before you can gain maximum benefit from reading your Bible.

Three Conditions:

--A Believing Mind
--A Tender Heart
--A Submissive Spirit

I. A BELIEVING MIND
. . . to understand God's Word (I Thes. 2:13)

The Scripture and the Savior - Jesus Christ are inseparably related (John 1:1).
The written Word tells about the Living Word.

No one receives the Living Word unless he hears the written Word (Rom. 10:17), and no one can grasp the written Word without the Living Word Jesus Christ abiding within.

A. You must believe in the SAVIOR
(You must be saved - I Cor. 2:6-16)

1. To understand a spiritual Book,
you must be spiritual (I Cor. 2:6-15)

a. An unsaved person generally has no desire to understand
("they are foolishness unto him" - v. 14)

b. An unsaved person has no ability to understand
("neither can he know them" - v. 14b)

EX: Ethiopian eunuch - "How can I except some man should guide me?" - Acts 8:31.

2. To understand a spiritual Book,
you must know the Author (I Cor. 2:16)

"We have the mind of Christ."

B. You must believe in the SCRIPTURE
(You must have a right view of Scripture - II Tim. 3:16)

1. You must believe in the inspiration of the Bible (v. 16a)

   The Bible is God-breathed.

2. You must believe in the authority of the Bible (v. 16b)

   The Bible tells me what to believe and how to live.

   Heb. 4:2 - "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Some heretics say:

"The Bible contains the Word of God."
(not all of it is)

"The Bible becomes the Word of God."
(when it speaks to you)

The Biblicist says:

"The Bible IS the Word of God."

Satan's attack has always been aimed at the Word of God - to question or to caused doubts and disbelief of God's Word.

EX: Eve - Gen. 3:1, "Hath God said?"

Only those who believe God's Word appreciate it and benefit from it.

Belief: Psalm 119:42, 66

Appreciation: Psalm 119:47, 48, 97, 103

SING Psalm 19:7-11

II. A TENDER HEART
. . . to accept and apply God's Word

(Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23)

What is the difference between someone who looks forward to reading their Bible, and someone who never or seldom wants to?

What is the difference between someone who loves coming to church and hearing a message, and someone who would rather stay home and play?

What is the difference between someone who gets something every time he reads or hears the Scriptures, and someone who is unchanged and even unchallenged whenever the Word is read or heard?

What is the difference between the two?

ANSWER: The condition of their hearts

Your heart is the door to your spirit; it is the gateway to your "inner-man."

This is why Solomon said: "Guard your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23).

Your heart is that invisible part of you that thinks, feels, and chooses. (It is the culmination of intellect, emotion, and will).

Your heart is that which loves and hates, chooses to do right and wrong.

"The LORD looketh on the heart" (I Sam. 16:7).

The Sower = A messenger of God

The Seed = The Word of God

The Soil = The heart of man
Which type of soil characterizes your heart?

A. HARD - Hearted (v. 4, 19)

***This soil characterizes the <u>rebellious</u> man** (one who does not want to hear it at all).

The "hard-hearted" person has this attitude: "No one is going to tell <u>me</u> what to do!"

"Harden not your hearts" (Heb. 3:8)
"He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed" (Prov. 29:1).

Some say, "I pray! I don't need church or Bible reading." --- "He that turneth away his ear <u>from hearing the Law</u>, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. 28:9).
This is the teen who goes to church because his parents "make him."

You can't grow anything in <u>ROCK</u>!

B. <u>FAINT</u> - Hearted (v. 5-6, 20-21)

***This soil characterizes the <u>non-committed</u> man** (one who is emotionally interested but not committed).

The "faint-hearted" person has this attitude: "It's <u>not worth</u> it!"

The stony heart says, "Living for Jesus is good [Okay] as long as it doesn't <u>cost</u> me anything." It's fine as long as all my friends are doing it. But if I ever get "made fun of" or actually opposed, I know this is "quitting time."

V. 20
"Anon with joy" - right away or immediately with much emotion.

This is the one who professes faith, gives a tear-jerking testimony, is all "on fire" for Christ, and then fizzles away when things get hot, never to be found again! [EX: Ron Stravel, Satanic cult leader]

This is the person who likes <u>learning</u> about the Bible in a class, chapel, or in church, so that he can get an "A" on his test, or please his teacher, or have the answers to give out to others (Ex: cults, other religions), but he himself does not totally believe it or obey it.

There is a need to <u>abide</u> in Christ and <u>His Words</u> in order to produce fruit (Jn. 15:1-8).

C. <u>HALF</u> - Hearted (v. 7, 22)

***This soil characterizes the easily distracted man** (one who is preoccupied, other things are more important).

The "half-hearted" person has this attitude: "This is boring!"

The thorns rob the water and minerals in the ground and choke out the sunlight from reaching the crop.

V. 22
"The care of this world" = The pre-occupations and anxieties of this present age.

--More worried about your career (job)
--More worried about your fame (status)
--More worried about paying your bills (Mt. 6:33)
--More worried about your marriage, world events, etc.

"Worry" will keep you from reading Bible and benefitting from it.

"The deceitfulness of riches" -

--Money is a deceiver (Mt. 19:23; I Tim. 6:9, 10, 17)
--Things preoccupy

The happy man is the one who has enough to live, but not enough to fall in love with it.

Something new (novel) and exciting can easily distract the half-hearted.

Why? Because they have one foot in the world while attempting to keep one foot in the Word (you can't do it - I Jn. 2:15-17).

You can't grow anything in GARBAGE!

D. WHOLE - Hearted (v. 8, 23)

***This soil characterizes the tender man** (one who has a sincere and good

heart - Luke 8:15).

The "Whole-hearted" person has this attitude: "Give me more!"

V. 23

The good ground:

1. "Heareth" (note: all "soils" heard the word - v. 19, 20, 22)

2. "Understandeth" - comprehension depends upon the condition of your heart.

   People don't understand for one of three reasons in their heart:

   1) They don't want to
   2) They don't put in the effort
OR 3) They want to do other things (distracted).

3. "Beareth fruit" - the result of understanding the Word!

Have a soft heart while you are young. If not, it will become more calloused as you get older [Old people are "set in their ways"}

The most dangerous position to be in is to be "set in your ways" -- because God can no longer teach you.

What we need is thirsty soil!

--Not cement which can take no water (hard heart)

--Not rock-filled shallow soil which can only drink a little (faint-hearted)

--Not thorn infested soil which has its water robbed (half-hearted)

--But fertile, cultivated soil which will soak in the seed and water (whole-hearted)

Mt. 5:6 - "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

CONCLUSION:

"God knoweth your hearts" (Lk. 16:15).

Although I cannot see your heart, I can know your heart by your fruit.

V. 23

"Fruitfulness" =

1) Doing things pleasing to God (Jn. 15:8)

2) Doing things you can bring to Heaven

[That your fruit should remain (last) - Jn. 15:16]

a. souls (Mt. 9:37-38)

b. service for the saints (Mt. 25:34-40)

The problem is often not the preaching (or preacher) but the condition of your heart.

The problem is never the Word of God, but is the condition of your heart.

SEE: Jer. 4:3-4

> "Break up your fallow (untilled) ground . . . and take away the foreskins of your heart . . ."

Our prayer needs to be:

"Take me"
"Break me"
"Mold me"
"Make me . . .
a tender-hearted Christian"

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Ps. 51:10).

III. A SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT
. . . to obey God's Word (James 1:21-25)

INTRO: The Word of God is shown in verses 19-27 by 3 figures:

1) as seed "implanted" (v. 21)
2) as a mirror (v. 23)
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To gain the most from your personal devotions, follow God's three steps to beneficial Bible reading:

A. First,
REMOVE SINFUL HINDRANCES (v. 21a)
(The Obstacles)

V. 21 "Lay apart" = to take off, strip off. Word was used of taking off dirty clothes.

"Filthiness" = dirtiness; moral defilement.
"Filthiness" = a medical term used of built-up ear wax.

"Superfluity of naughtiness" = excess of wickedness (evil).

Ex. When we got saved, we put off the "big" sins. We emptied the cup which was full of sin. Now God calls on you to wipe off the remainder. --- those internal sins of wrong attitude.

Sin prevents you from (soaking in) taking in God's Word.

"All" - "God is never satisfied with partial purity, partial goodness, partial righteousness." (Gaebelein, p. 50)
And any known sin in your life will block your reception of the Word.

SEE I Peter 2:1-2 - Before you can benefit from your Bible, you must "lay aside" all obstacles.

B. Second,
READ WITH A TEACHABLE ATTITUDE (v. 21b)

(Openness)

V. 21 "Meekness" = mildness, gentleness (it's a fruit of the Spirit). It is a humble and gentle attitude which expresses itself in a patient submissiveness to that which you don't want to hear, or like to hear.

*This word stands in contrast to the word "wrath" (v. 19, 20).

"Meekness" - the kind of man whose feelings and emotions are under control.
He is one who opens his heart with teachableness.

Are you willing to accept whatever God says?

1) Even if it is not what you were taught in the past?

2) Even if it is not what you once thought, taught, or published?

3) Even if you cannot totally understand it?

(EX: election/free will; Trinity, etc.)

"Engrafted" - implanted.

Not referring to birth (as v. 18) but to growth.
God's word like seed has been planted into your heart. Is it growing and producing fruit? **See Mt. 13:1-9**

"Save your souls" = deliver you life! Rescue your life.

"Soul" (psucha) is the immaterial part of man as it relates to this life. "Spirit" (pneuma) relates to God.

By receiving (accepting) the Word, you are guaranteeing a life without ruin, spiritual tragedy.

C. Third,
RESPOND WITH OBEDIENT ACTION (v. 22-25)

(Observance)

"Doer" - present tense = continual action. (a habit of life).

A key word in Deut. : DO -- Obey the Law!

It's easier to know what is right than to do what is right.

To learn and not to do is not to learn. Unless a message is acted upon, it is never learned.

Illus. - Spiritual obesity. Fat and lazy Christians (who know everything and do nothing).

"Arm-chair Quarterbacks - have all the answers but never play the game.

Knowledge puffs up (proud attitude) Love builds up (proper action).

1. The foolishness of the "hearer only" (v. 22-24)

   a. They are self-deceived readers (v. 22)

      V. 22 "Deceiving" = to misjudge, miscalculate. To miss the point.

      You miss the whole point of God's word if you know and don't do. This is the height of foolishness.

      Deceived because he thought he really benefitted. Illus. Wise man (a doer) and foolish man (one who does not do Christ's sayings). Mt. 7:24 - 29.

      The gospel should have changed your life! We learn truth to live it! Not admire it, worship it, etc.
      Illus. of a plow that was donated and sent to Africa. A primitive tribe did not know its purpose, so they set it up on a pedestal and worshipped it. They perverted it from its original design and purpose.

   b. They are careless readers (v. 23-24a)

      "A man beholding" = Gk. word for male in contrast to female. Women

are more sensitive by nature. See flaws more easily. (spend more time in front of the mirror)

The Bible is like a mirror. It reflects defects, needs, areas that need change.

V. 23, 24 - One who knows the Word but does not obey it is like:

1. a man who is lost while holding a map in his hand
2. a man who knows what is wrong with his health but does nothing about it.

--They take too quick a look (v. 24)
--They look without any intention of changing

Or he may:
--look with someone else in mind
--look with good intentions but never get around to doing them.

c. They are forgetful readers (v. 24b)

2. The faithfulness of the "doer" (v. 25)

a. He is a serious reader ("looketh into")

"Looketh into" = to bend over and look intently. To stoop down to see exactly. To examine it minutely. (ex. Bereans).
"Looketh" - the word was used in secular Greek when referring to those who were bent over looking out their windows at someone else's party.

Ex. Jn. 20:5,11 - Disciples bent over and looked intently into the empty tomb.

b. He is a steady reader ("continueth therein")

Psalm 1:1-3

"Continueth" = remain, stay

c. He is a submissive reader ("a doer of the work")

"Doer" - He puts it into practice.

The way to prevent forgetfulness is by practicing what you know. We remember very little of what we read, a little more of what we hear, a little more of what we see . . . most of what we practice.

"If any man will do His will, he shall know the doctrine . . ." (John 7:17).

*If a person is not obeying what he has already been entrusted with, God will not give him any more (SEE: Mt. 25:14-30 *v. 29
Lk. 8:15-21)

PRACTICAL TIPS:

l. Take notes in church
2. Keep notes at home (ex. post them)
3. Take notes during devotions

1. Plan - schedule obedience to what you know
2. Be determined to practice one truth that God teaches or reminds you of each day.

CONCLUSION:

Blessing only comes to the "doer" of God's Word (SEE Joshua 1:8; Matthew 7:24-29)

Blessing is only in doing!

(the reward comes only to the doer)

Knowing does not equal blessing, but knowing and doing does.

Ex. of learning to ride a bike, drive a car, play trumpet, play a sport, etc. -- You can read all the books you want; you don't gain the blessing of learning how until you do it!

"HOW TO READ YOUR BIBLE
. . . and get something out of it"

God's Plan for Bible Reading (Psalm 119)

Introduction:

I. Reserve a special time
to get alone in God's Word (v. 147-148)

II. Prepare your heart
to receive God's Word (v. 2, 10, 32)

David's attitude toward the Bible:

He loved it (v. 97,113, 119, 127, 159, 163, 167)

He longed for it (v. 20, 40, 131)

He delighted in it (v. 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 174)

A. Ask God to "incline your heart" (give you a desire) for the Word (v. 36)

David considered the Word to be:

1. Better than . . . "gold and silver" (v. 72; cp. v. 127, 162)

2. Sweeter than honey to my mouth" (v. 103)

B. "Incline your heart" (determine) to obey what you learn from the Word (v. 112)

III. Pray for "open eyes"
to understand God's Word (v. 18)

Psalm 119:18 is the secret to spiritual "20/20 vision."

--We all have blind spots.

--We tend to merely skim the surface.

"Teach me thy statutes" (v. 26, 64, 68, 124, 135)

"Make me to understand" (v. 27)

"Teach me" (v. 33)

"Give me understanding" (v. 34, 73, 125)

"Teach me thy judgments" (v. 108)

IV. Memorize important verses to internalize ("hide") God's Word (v. 11)

Psalm 37:31 - "The law of his God is in his heart: none of his steps shall slide."

Psalm 40:8 - "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

[Example: Mary pondering God's words in her heart (Lk. 2:19, 51)]

Memorize verses that deal with a weakness in your life.

V. Meditate on verses you know to strengthen yourself with God's Word (v. 15)

A. Meditate when problems strike (v. 23, 78)

B. Meditate in the darkest night (v. 148)

C. Meditate to gain insight (v. 99)

D. Meditate because you love what's right (v. 97)

Meditation is the key to successful Christian living (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2-3)

VI. Sing songs of Scripture

to gain joy and peace from God's Word (v. 54)

Singing is the key to being Spirit-filled! And is the evidence of being Spirit-filled!

Eph. 5:19 - "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

Col. 3:16 - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Conclusion:

Reading your Bible and getting something out of it is the key to:

1. A clean life (v. 9, 11)
2. A calm life (v. 50, 165)
3. A complete life
    a. Complete in wisdom (v. 98-100)
    b. Complete in obedience (v. 33-34)