How to have Personal Devotions

(The Way to have a Quiet Time Alone with God – Part 2)

1/20/2013



God's Prerequisites for Bible Reading

1. You must be saved ("born again")
2. You must be a spiritual Christian, not carnal.
3. You must have a proper view of Scripture
4. You must be obedient to what you already know.
5. You must be surrendered (yielded) to the Holy Spirit.
6. You must be willing to accept whatever God says.
7. You must be willing to personally apply whatever God says.
8. You must be willing to obey whatever God says.
9. You must be willing to work hard and faithfully interpret
   a. Seek the ordinary (normal, plain) meaning of the Passage. (The Literal Principle)
   b. Understand the context (of the verses you are studying) (The Contextual Principle)

How do you read your Bible and benefit every time?
God's Plan for Bible Reading (Psalm 119)

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)

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

IV. Read to internalize ("hide") God's Word (v. 11)

V. Go Looking for God's Glory
To be transformed by God's Word *(2 Cor. 3:18)*

Ask yourself good questions as you read:

1. Is there a **promise** for me to claim?
2. Is there a **sin** to repent of or an **error** to avoid?
3. Is there a **command** for me to obey?
4. Is there an **example** for me to follow?
5. Is there a **quality about God** to consider?
6. Is there a **lesson** to learn?

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The Importance of the Bible:

Job considered God's Word more important than his necessary Food.

Job 23:12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

Jesus said God's Word was vitally important for a person to sustain his life.

Matthew 4:4 - But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Jeremiah testified that God's Word was a food that brought joy to his heart.

Jeremiah 15:16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart:

Joshua discovered that God's Word was the key to his life's success.

Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

The Psalmist testified that God had elevated the importance of His Word even above the importance of His Name!

Psalm 138:2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

David considered God's Word sweeter than honey and of more value than Gold.

Psalm 119:103 - How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Psalm 119:72 - The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

Colossians 3:16 says,
"let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom"

Note the following word pictures which depict the unique power of the Bible:

a. **The Bible is a <u>Mirror</u>**
...so that you can <u>see yourself</u> as <u>God sees you</u> (James 1:23-25)

b. **The Bible is <u>water</u>**
... so that you can have a <u>clean</u> <u>heart</u> (Eph. 5:26)

c. **The Bible is <u>Nourishing Food</u>**
... so that you can <u>grow</u> into maturity (I Pet.2:2; Heb.5:14)
a. It is <u>milk</u> that causes growth (I Pet. 2:2)
b. It is <u>meat</u> that gives strength (Heb. 5:14; I Cor. 3:1-3)

d. **The Bible is a <u>Lamp and Light</u>**
... so that you can have <u>guidance</u> and <u>direction</u> into God's Will for your life (Ps. 119:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 105)

e. **The Bible is a <u>Sword</u>**
...so that you can fight the <u>enemy</u> (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17)

f. **The Bible is a <u>Fire</u>**
...so that God can melt cold hearts and ignite revival (Jer. 20:9; Lk. 24:32).

g. **The Bible is a <u>hammer</u>**
... so that God can break into Hardened hearts and <u>build</u> lives (Jer. 23:29)

h. **The Bible is a <u>Breath of God</u>**
... so that you can be <u>revived</u> for good works (II Tim.3:16-17)

i. **The Bible is a <u>Seed</u>**
... so that your life can produce <u>fruit</u> (Matthew 13:8,23)

* You grow as your faith grows; and your faith only grows by hearing the Word.

God's Prerequisites for Bible Reading

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 Basic Conditions:

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

Before anyone can comprehend the wonderful, challenging, mind-boggling, and at times mysterious truths found in God's Word, they must qualify!

What are the Fundamental Conditions for proper Bible study?

1. You must be saved ("born again")

   a. To understand the Bible, you must know the author.

   b. To understand a spiritual Book, you must be Spiritual.
   SEE: I Cor. 2:6-16.

   c. An unsaved person may have some desire, but no ability to comprehend even the most basic teachings of Scripture.
   (EX: the Ethiopian eunich - "How can I, except some man should guide me?")

2. You must be a spiritual Christian, not carnal.

   a. SEE: I Cor. 3:1-3 - the carnal Christian cannot come into the fullness of God's truth.

   b. sin will blind you from truth. wordliness- your mind is not on God's "wave-length."
   Pride - your mind is puffed up with your own ideas.

3. You must have a proper view of Scripture

   a. The interpreter must believe in the inspiration of the Bible (II Tim. 3:16a).

   b. The interpreter must believe in the Authority of the Bible (II Tim. 3:16b).

   c. The interpreter must have a love and appreciation for the Bible (Ps. 119:47, 48, 97).

4. You must be obedient to what you already know.

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

5. You must be surrendered (yielded) to the Holy Spirit.
   Why?

   a. The Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture (II Pet. 1:21).

   b. The Holy Spirit is our guide into Scripture (Jn. 16:13).

   c. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher of Scripture (Jn. 16:14, 15; I Cor. 2:10-13).

      *Before you can fully understand God's truth: "The will of the student must be surrendered to the will of the Author."
      R.A. Torrey

6. You must be willing to accept whatever God says.

   a. Are you willing to accept new truth even though it is not what you were taught in the past?

   b. Are you willing to accept new truth even though it contradicts what you once thought, taught, or even published?

   c. Are you willing to accept new truth even though you cannot totally understand it? ((EX: election/free-will; trinity, etc.).

7. You must be willing to personally apply whatever God says.

   For example: Whenever you study the Bible, ask yourself the question: "What does this mean to me?"; "How can I incorporate these truths into my life today?"

   *When you study for a lesson, always do so for your own edification first.

8. You must be willing to obey whatever God says.

   a. James 1:22 - "Be ye doers of the Word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

   b. John 7:17 - "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine. . ."

      "God will not teach you the things that He knows you are not willing to do and accept."

9. You must be willing to work hard and faithfully interpret God's Word.

   a. Diligence is demanded - (The Bereans: Acts 17:11 - "Searched the Scriptures daily"; We must: "study (give diligence) to show thyself approved unto God . . ." - II Tim. 2:15a).

   b. Principles of interpretation (hermeneutics) are essential - ". . . a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15b).

What are the basic principles that will guide me to an accurate interpretation of Scripture?

A. Avoid the traps of illegitimate Bible Interpretation

1. Beware of Building a "theological superstructure" on the foundation of only one verse of Scripture.

   (Don't build a doctrine from the support of only one verse without comparing that interpretation against the rest of Scripture.)

2 .Beware of filtering Scripture through the grid of a dogmatic presupposed system or viewpoint.

   We all are prone to read the Bible having a set of preconceived ideas, cultural ideals, & biased world-views. Don't force your ideas & viewpoints into the text.

   (Don't see everything in Scripture through tinted "glasses" but rather submit your thoughts to the thoughts of Holy Scripture)

   Note: Systematic theology is valid & necessary but should be submissive to unbiased exegesis.

3. Beware of finding more meaning from a passage than is actually there.

   (Don't read between the lines; Interpret what God says not what He doesn't say)

Follow the rules of legitimate Bible Interpretation

1. Seek the ordinary (normal, plain) meaning of the Passage. (The Literal Principle)

This principle is based on the clarity of the Bible.

(The truth of the Scripture can be clearly seen without treating the Bible like some mystical or cryptic book with hidden meanings "between the lines")

"The news papers & media consistently speak condescendingly, if not derisively, of biblical "literalists" (McQuilkin, p.64)

a. Take the Bible for what it says at face value.

1) Seek the natural and obvious meaning of Scripture.

"If the normal (plain) sense makes good sense, seek no other sense, or you will have nonsense!"

2) Look for the obvious meaning intended by the Author.
Ask yourself: "What did this passage mean to the people who first recieved it from an apostle or prophet. Understand the historical, phisical & cultural setting in which the passage was written.

3) Look for the most natural meaning intended by the Author.

What the Bible says and what the Bible means are alwlays the same unless an obvious figure of speech is being used.

4) Seek the single meaning intended by the Author.

"Every passage of Scripture has only one meaning unless the author says there is another meaning" (McQuilkin, p.66)

For example some prophetic statements may have both an immediate fulfillment and a prophetic fulfilllment. If so the NT will declare such.

Let God say what He does say, instead of making Him say what you think He should have said.

Pull out the meaning of the text ("exegete") rather than putting your own idea into the text ("eisogete").

2. Understand the context (of the verses you are studying) (The Contextual Principle)

This principle is based on the Harmony of the Bible.

The Bible is not a collection or scrapbook of independent, unrelated religious statements. Rather, it is an orderly and harmonious unfolding of God's truth.

1) What does it mean to understand the context?

The interpreter must follow the author's Flow of thought before the verse (or verses) you are studying and after the verse (or verses) you are studying.

To fully understand a word, you must understand the sentence which the word is in.

To fully understand a sentence, you must understand the paragraph which the sentence is in.

To fully understand a paragraph, you must understand the book which the paragraph is in.

To fully understand the book, you must understand the Bible as a whole.

2) What steps do I take in studying the context?

a) Determine where the context (paragraph or unit of thought) begins and ends.

How do we determine this?

(1) Look for the chapter division (Remember that chapter and verse divisions are not inspired. They usually are good indications of a change in thought, but not always).

(2) Look for a change in:

(a) subject (EX: Does the writer shift from the subject of gifts to love? I Cor. 12-13)

(b) speaker (first, second, or third person)

(3) Look for conjunctions or transitional phrases that indicate a shift (EX: "now," "finally," "after these things," "and it came to pass").

b) Determine the major thought or primary idea that is being stressed in the context.

(in other words, always ask yourself: What is the main point that God is emphasizing in this context?)

How do you determine this?

(1) Look for repeated words
(obvious examples: Love - I Cor. 13;
Faith - Heb. 11).

(2) Look for a repeated idea
(EX: I Th. 5:16-18 - be consistent in your inner life with God).

(3) Look for a key phrase or sentence which the writer expands on or explains (a knowledge of grammar will help here)

(EX: I Th. 4:3-8 - Paul says, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" in v. 3a; Paul then explains what he means by sanctification in v. 3bff).

HOW DO YOU READ YOUR BIBLE and benefit every time?

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. Read 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. Go Looking for God's Glory
To be transformed by God's Word

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18)

A. This Transformation is a Continual Process

B. This Transformation is a Passive Process

When We Spend Time with God, We Become Like Him (v.18c)

Ask yourself good questions as you read:

1. Is there a **promise** for me to claim?
2. Is there a **sin** to repent of or an **error** to avoid?
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