

Additional Thoughts on Bible Reading

It should be daily (as much as possible). It should be complete (the entire Bible). It should be thoughtful (take notes).

The entire Word is given to be read and learned in its entirety. The only true way for a believer to be exposed to the entire Word regularly, routinely, and effectively is with a continuous regimen of reading through the Bible. Psalm 1 implies or expects that we will be doing so.

Breadth of Scripture is essential to properly understand the Word. It takes both depth (detailed study) and breadth (the context of the entire Word) to properly understand the Word.

God gave us the entire Word, not just our favorite passages, books, or verses. If we have never read the entire Word, how would we know the intent and extent of God's revelation? How can we consider that we are knowledgeable of and faithful to what we have never read or given attention to? How can we come to conclusions to any decision or course of action without knowing what God has revealed about Himself and His will?

What We Gain If We Do

- *Knowing God through the constant fellowship of His revelation about Himself, His actions, and His truth as He has created and worked with humanity throughout history and prophecy as revealed in His Word.*
- *An understanding of the only foundational form of truth found anywhere.*
- *A broad scope of God's working as it interrelates throughout the Scriptures.*
- *An understanding of God's hatred of sin, and certainty of dealing with sin and those that commit sin.*
- *An understanding of God's plan for mankind.*
- *An understanding of God's expectations for nations, churches, families, and individuals in their God-assigned duties and roles.*
- *A breadth of view that complements depth of study. It is amazing how the same truths are reinforced in many different ways throughout the Old and New Testaments. Things make more sense and fit together when we begin seeing the big picture as well as the small pieces. Both are necessary. Either by itself is incomplete.*
- *A steadily deepening understanding of God that we cannot get any other way.*

What we miss if we don't

- *The absence of knowing God as He has revealed Himself. It is like reading one sentence out of a long letter from a loved one, and assuming we know the entire contents. What arrogance to think that we know God in some full or complete way by only reading a small portion of His Word.*
- *We can easily miss the truth: "You do err, not knowing the Scriptures."*

Recommendations and Suggestions:

Use a literal translation of the Bible. Reading a less literal translation may be easier, but it is also less accurate. If you are reading a "loose" translation (dynamic equivalent that really is a concise commentary, with the "translator" putting the idea across, rather than the word for word translation), you are only getting the translator's interpretation, rather than a true translation. What is the point of reading something that is not accurate? (Some good literal translations are the KJV, NKJV, NASB, and ESV.)

Stir up your methods. Use different Bible reading schedules, one-year Bibles, chronological Bibles, etc.

Read entire books when possible, before moving on. Remember, your goal is to get the big picture of the Word, but also of each book. Some schedules may have you reading two books at once (Genesis and Matthew, for example). This isn't wrong, but if you attempt too many books at once, or spread them out too long, you miss much of the benefit of reading through the Bible.

Read to comprehend the big picture and context, not to study the details. (Don't go too deep for through-the-Bible reading. Look up a word to understand its meaning, if desired, or review a commentary on something that got your attention, but your goal is to get the passage/book in its own context, not for the revealed thoughts to be broken up.) Deeper study should be done another time and way, such as reviewing sermons from your pastor, or doing your own study with language tools and other resources. Reading is breadth; study is depth. Both are necessary. Don't confuse or mix the two (or you could really lose both).

Avoid using a study Bible (any Bible with profuse notes) for reading through the Bible. It can often bog you down in the details and cause you to miss the context and flow of what God has revealed. Study Bibles are good for studying, but I would encourage you to avoid them for reading through your Bible. (It may be one of your methods one time through, but you will be amazed what you will see if you maintain a flow of reading uninterrupted by marginal references explaining extraneous details.)

Aim for consistency, not perfection. Missing a day is not failure – it just means you missed a day. The goal is a consistent, continuous reading of the Word on a daily basis. If you do miss a day, evaluate why you did so, and make corrections, if needed (a trip to the emergency room or some urgent need to serve another is a worthy reason to miss, though once in the habit, you will likely read even then.) If you end up reading 5 out of 7 days in a week, or 340 days out of a 365-day year, you are developing the habit, and you are probably WAY ahead of where you were.

It is work to start. Eventually, it becomes part of your life. The goal is to spend time reading at least one chapter a day (or more depending upon your pace). It is a discipline to develop. It will take effort and require saying "no" to other things to get it done (TV, computer time, other activities).