

Reading the Bible

Where everything begins

Psalm 1

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Scripture Reader and Reading: Lake – Joshua 1.7, 8

Prelude:

I. In April 2009, I began a ministry of getting into everyone's home, and

- A. teaching a brief Bible lesson on "Reading the Bible."
- B. I began with Nathan, and then
 - 1. we each took an elder with us, either George or Dan Calvert.
 - 2. Then we took a break.
- C. Later Kerri and I went into the remainder of the homes and taught the lessons.
 - 1. We finally finished last month, February 2012.
 - a) We also conducted a survey, asking you four questions.
 - 2. I told you that I would deliver a sermon to finish up this material, and
 - a) that is what I am doing today.

II. Here is what we covered in your homes, and additional material.

Persuasion:

I. Reasons for Reading the Bible

- A. Reasons for reading the Bible stagger the imagination, but
 - 1. I want to talk more about reading the Bible
 - 2. rather than persuading you to read it.
 - a) Therefore, I will just present one passage
 - b) that I believe provides overwhelming motivation for reading the Bible.
- B. Psalm 19 reveals that the Scriptures do things for us
 - 1. that provide enough persuasive power to read the Bible daily, and

2. if you truly begin to experience what Psalm 19 says,
 - a) you will wonder why it took you so long
 - b) to start reading the Bible daily.

C. Do you want:

1. To change your life?
2. To become wiser?
3. To have happiness in your heart?
4. To have enlightenment?
5. To endure forever?
6. To have truth and righteousness in your life?
7. To have something more valuable than gold?
8. To have something sweeter than honey?
9. To be warned of harmful things?
10. To have a great reward for committing your life to something?

D. Those are ten unsurpassable workings or blessings of the Bible from Psalm 19,

- 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, *converting the soul*;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, *making wise the simple*;
- 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, *rejoicing the heart*;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, *enlightening the eyes*;
- 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, *enduring forever*;
The judgments of the LORD are *true and righteous altogether*.
- 10 More to be desired are they than *gold*,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than *honey and the honeycomb*.
- 11 Moreover by them Your servant is *warned*,
And in keeping them there is *great reward*.
(Psa 19.7–11)

- E. Back in the early 1980s, brother Steve Lloyd showed me a couple of passages
1. that demonstrate the power of meditating on the Scriptures, and
 2. those passages led me
 - a) to read the Bible daily and
 - b) to read the whole Bible annually.
 - (1) I saw how the Scriptures have all the answers, and yet,
 - (2) I dealt with many people with
 - (a) problems of living,
 - (b) doctrinal error, and
 - (c) other issues, but
 - i) they did not know how to deal with those things, yet,
 - ii) I could see how the Bible addressed their problems, and so
 - (1) I encouraged people to read the Scriptures daily, and
 - (2) seeing how Jesus used the Scriptures to help people,
 - (a) also persuaded me to encourage people
 - (b) to meditate in the Bible everyday.
 3. To further encourage daily Bible reading and meditation,
 - a) in 1990, I started *The Bible Mediator*,
 - b) which you used to get until I stopped publishing it in paper format, but
 - (1) it is now online at TheBibleMeditator.com.

II. Reading the Bible

A. Psalm 1 Think on the Text

1 Blessed is the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

- Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.
- 4 The ungodly are not so,
But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
- 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.
(Psa 1.1–6)

B. Joshua 1.7, 8 The Secret to Success

7 “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Jos 1.7, 8).

C. Joshua 8.34, 35 Give Attention to the Scriptures

34 And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them (Jos 8.34, 35).

D. Many people do not read or meditate in the Scriptures daily because

1. they either cannot remember what they read or their mind wanders.
2. I also used to have those problems, and sometimes still do, but
 - a) I learned to do things that kept me focused and helped me to remember.
 - b) When I find my mind wandering again or
 - (1) when I realize that I did not remember what I just read,
 - (2) it is because I forgot to do the thing I want to mention next.

III. Wandering and Remembering

- A. Do not try to remember everything that you read.
 1. Choose part of the reading that stands out in your mind.
 2. Pray about it.
 3. Go and do what the passage said.
- B. Write down your thoughts about the reading.
 1. Tell someone what you have read.
 2. This is what launched my e-mail devotionals, starting in 1996,
 - a) although sporadic at first, but
 - b) as I read the Scriptures more,
 - (1) the more I had to tell others what I had discovered.
 - (2) Now, I send out two e-mail devotionals everyday, and
 - (a) have written over 6,500 of them.
 - (b) That is not bragging, but
 - i) it is telling you what will happen,
 - ii) if you start reading the Bible daily, and tell others.
- C. Love the word because you love the One who wrote it.
 1. How eagerly did you read notes from a girl or boyfriend?

2. How eagerly did you read letters from your children or grandchildren?

a) It is the relationship that makes the letter special, and

b) it is the relationship that makes you want to read it.

(1) How would you describe your relationship with God?

(2) Improve that relationship by reading what He had written to you.

D. Pray for concentration.

1. Pray without ceasing for it.

2. God will answer your prayer, because

a) He, more than you, wants you to focus and to remember His word.

b) Try it and see what happens.

E. Read daily.

1. Reading daily makes you familiar with the text.

2. If you are not familiar with it,

a) you will not be able to focus, and

b) you will not be able to remember.

(1) Do you not remember those things that you do habitually?

(2) Reading it every year helps the concentration and the memory.

F. Experience the text.

1. See things.

2. Hear things.

3. Smell things.

a) Put yourself there.

G. Understand the use of punctuation.

1. One purpose of punctuation is to pause.

2. Without those pauses we miss some of the meaning of the text.

H. Understand the purpose of key words: That, for, therefore, et al.

1. John 3.16 begins with, “For,” but do you know why?

- a) Let that word be a clue for you to read the verses before.
- b) Remember that man created most of the verse and chapter divisions.

2. Ephesians 5.25–27 and “that.”

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish (Eph 5.25–27).

- a) “That” reveals three reasons why Jesus loved the church by dying for her.
- b) “That” may not always reveal such points, but often does.

I. Outline the text.

1. Ephesians 5.25–27 is a good example.

2. First Chronicles 12.8 provides material with which you could parallel NT

- a) Some Gadites joined David – Jesus is our David
- b) at the stronghold in the wilderness – The church is the stronghold in the world
- c) mighty men of valor – Christians stand bravely against Satan
- d) men trained for battle – We have to be trained
- e) who could handle shield and spear – The shield of faith, and the spear or sword of the Scriptures
- f) whose faces were like the faces of lions – We are fierce against Satan
- g) were as swift as gazelles on the mountains – We are diligent

3. Someone objects, saying, I am not a preacher.
 - a) So what.
 - b) Keep this stuff in a notebook and when you die,
 - (1) your children and grandchildren
 - (2) will go through the material and be fascinated.
- J. Find a style of reading in the Scriptures that captures your attention.
 1. Enhance your reading skills in that kind of literature and
 2. then you can learn concentration and memory.
- K. Read the Scriptures as though you are the first one to receive it.
- L. Pick a time when your mind is not racing,
 1. thinking about the other things you have to do.
 2. Or have paper and pen close, and write down those other things,
 - a) so that you can get back to reading and meditating.
- M. Limit your reading.
 1. This will prevent racing through the reading,
 2. thinking about the next thing that you have to or want to do.
- N. Imagine that you are a narrator for a movie.
 1. Do you have a favorite narrator?
 2. I like to hear Morgan Freeman, or recently I heard Christopher Plummer.
 - a) Imagine your favorite movies that are narrated and
 - b) think how the narrator does it, and
 - (1) do it as you read the Bible.
- O. Create cliff hangers for yourself.
 1. Stop reading just before something dramatic happens.

Exhortation:

I. Whatever we need to know about salvation,

- A. the Lord has already revealed it in the Scriptures.
- B. He will not send an angel, the Holy Spirit, or give us a miracle to save us.
- C. Everything we need to know and do, comes from Scripture.

II. There are many good things that you will discover

- A. when you begin reading the Bible daily, but
- B. the supreme discovery shall be
 - 1. God's love for you, and
 - 2. His desire to save you from
 - a) hell and the coming destruction of the earth and
 - b) to bring you to His home in heaven.

III. The word blesses you now;

- A. it shall bless you far more for eternity.
- B. However, it only blesses if you do what it says.
 - 1. Are you ready to do what it says?
 - 2. Do you know what it says to do?
 - a) The Bible tells you to be a follower of Jesus Christ,
 - b) willing to leave
 - (1) anything and everything,
 - (2) anyone and everyone behind.
- C. It almost sounds as though you have to die to yourself.