

How to Read The Bible

by John S. Bonnell, Source Unknown

Here is a method for the daily reading of the Bible which has proved itself of definite value to many people.

First

Commence with a book of the Bible, and continue to read in small instalments in that book until you have completed it. Then select another book, and read it through to the finish. In this way you will not miss any of the searching messages of God's Word. For this purpose the Psalms and the New Testament will be found to be most helpful.

Second

Keep on reading until you come to a verse that you can feel is God's "marching orders" for you for the day. Don't be afraid to mark your Bible. Underline that verse, and let it search every area of your life. God's Spirit will bring its truth to bear upon your heart and mind. Carry that verse with you through the day. It will be as a staff on your journey. In many a trying hour it will steady and inspire you.

Third

Mark the place where you have finished reading, and commence with the next verse the following day. It may be advisable for you to tarry on the one verse for several days or even a week until the full implication of its teaching has been brought to bear upon your life. You will find that, in many cases, you may have read ten verses or fifteen before coming to the one that you feel is God's message for the day. On the other hand, you may have read only four or five verses, or, in more exceptional cases, only one.

Fourth

Always preface your reading by a brief prayer that God's Holy Spirit will bring the truth of His Word to bear upon your heart. As you open the Bible to read from the place where you have left off the previous day, ask yourself this question: "What is God's message for me today?" Exclude from your mind every thought of the application of this message to other persons whom you know in your own home or among your business associates and friends. This is God's message for you. The power of concentration and the ability to apply God's message to your own life, and yours alone, will come slowly. It will increase with your growth in spiritual discipline.

If you preserve your daily reading, you will be given messages that will meet the deepest needs of your life; that will send you forth to face the experiences of the day with head erect and a brave heart. I predict, too, that sometimes you will be startled by what God will say to you in the morning. Out of the written Word He will speak directly to you, and will bring to your mind hidden faults and failings to which you have long been blind.

Fifth

When you have allowed God's message of the morning to search your heart, a prayer of thanksgiving for an accession of spiritual strength or a prayer of confession and penitence for your mistakes and failures will well up within you. Make every day a day of new beginnings and of fresh consecration to the

service of God. Having sought and found God's forgiveness for the wrongs of the past, turn your back resolutely on these failures, and face the new life which, by the grace of God, is opening up before you.

Sixth

Be sure to keep inviolate this period for the daily reading of the Bible. Before long it will begin to bear fruit. Many of the texts with which you begin the day will remain fixed in your memory, and they will be a source of strength and guidance to you just when you need them most.

A business man said to me recently, "Sometimes after waking in the morning I am almost appalled by the thought of all the duties and appointments that await me in the next eight or ten hours. Then I repeat to myself these texts of the Bible: 'In quietness and confidence shall be my strength.' Thou wilt keep me in perfect peace, for my mind is stayed on Thee.' It is astonishing," he said, "how quickly the load is lifted when once I become aware of God's presence and God's help. The strain and the tension go out of the day, and there wells up within me a feeling of serenity and peace."

THE BIBLE leads us to God, and teaches us His will. Yet, few people know how to read this Book. This is true even of many professing Christians. It has little real value for them. Usually they will not admit this. They feel that to do so would be a kind of sacrilege. If they were altogether frank, they would have to concede that they get very little help from the Bible, and that they do not read it regularly.

One young woman, who is a church member, said to me recently, "I never read the Bible except when I am looking up a passage about which I have had an argument with someone." A young man confessed that his mother, who is now dead, had urged him to read the Bible. "I honestly tried to read it," he said, "but I couldn't make anything of it. I keep it now in the bottom of a bureau drawer."

Others make a practice of reading exactly one chapter a day; but, if you press them to tell you what help they get from this reading, they are vague and uncertain. In the course of a conversation, a woman said to me, "The Bible is a wonderful book. I just wouldn't dream of commencing the day without reading my chapter." "Tell me," I answered, "what did you get out of that chapter this morning? What lessons did you learn? What message did you get from God?" She wasn't able to recall anything from her reading, and confessed that that was true, not only on the day of our interview, but every day. She felt that she was accumulating merit by reading a chapter a day. It was the right thing to do, she thought, altogether apart from whether or not she was helped by her reading.

There are many reasons why one might read the Bible. I am only concerned in this leaflet, however, with the Bible as a practical guide to life.