

How to Read the Bible (Pt.2)

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Bible / Read; Bible

How important is it to read your Bible? Where does Scripture memory and meditation come in? In this message, Pastor Steve will continue the 5 ways to read the Bible and also talk about the importance of Scripture memory and meditation.

INTRODUCTION

- Last week we looked at a topic that was supposed to take only one Sunday to complete
- That topic was “How to Read the Bible”
- Reading our Bible should be a top priority
- And this year I am wanting to encourage you to read your Bible or read it more
- In a recent poll conducted by Lifeway Research, 83% said “they are more likely to talk to God through prayer rather than reading from the Bible.”
- So only 17% in this survey reads the Bible
- We said last week that when you pray you are talking to God
- When you read the Bible God is talking to you
- Both are extremely important
- Both should be a daily regular activity in your life
- Even the world recognizes the benefits of reading
- One website notes that “6 additional minutes of reading per day can significantly improve... reading performance” (<https://comfyliving.net/reading-statistics>)
- Another site said “reading can reduce stress levels by...68%” (<https://whydoeseverythingsuck.net/blog/book-reading-statistics>)
- But unfortunately “Americans between the ages of 15 and 44 only spend 10 minutes or less of their day reading books” (<https://www.crossrivertherapy.com/research/reading-statistics>)
- But if you committed yourself to reading everyday for at least “20 minutes every day,” you “will have exposure to approximately 2 million words annually” (Ibid)
- Other sites noted these benefits:
- Reading helps reduce mental decline by 32%

- 19% of readers say spending time with a book makes them feel less lonely
- Reading for 6 minutes slows heart rates and eases tension
- Lifelong readers have lower rate of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia than their peers
- Reading increases intelligence, it gives knowledge
- It makes you think
- But I think the most important is this
- Reading God's Word on a regular basis will cause you to know God
- You will also know what He says about everything
- If is not addressed directly, He gives principles for governing your decisions
- But to get the most out of your reading, I am suggesting 5 ways you can read it
- We talked about 3 of them last time

· We said you need to...

LESSON

I. Read Prayerfully

- Our reading should be done with the deepest reverence
- No one can comprehend the teachings of the Bible in his own ability
- He must have the assistance of the Holy Spirit
- Remember “the Holy Spirit helps us in our infirmities, but not our idleness” (Spurgeon)
- David's prayed in [Psalm 119:18](#), “Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.”
- David was praying that God would “unveil [his] eyes” (Manton)
- He wanted God to “take away from [his] eyes what is before them to prevent clear vision”
- So before you start reading your Bible, it is crucial to pray (Pickowicz)
- Prayer and Bible reading go together and so does dependence on the Holy Spirit

· Next you must...

II. Read Undistractedly

- The number one reason why people don't read the Bible is because they are too busy.

- George Barna said, “40%” reported that their Bible reading decreased because they were “too busy with life’s responsibilities.”
- But that’s not all
- We also said a second distraction is TV
- If you are an average American 18 years of age, you have already amassed about 18,000 hours of TV viewing
- Experts tell us that by the time a TV-raised American reaches the age of 65, he will have had an average of nine-and-a-half years of solid TV viewing
- That’s 15 percent of a person’s life spent in front of the TV set! (Taken from A.C. Nielsen)
- If on the other hand, a person went to Sunday School regularly from birth till age 65, he would only have had a total of four months of solid Bible teaching
- Yesterday I read an article in Newsweek that was more alarming that the statistics about TV viewing
- The article said the “average teenager looks at screens 7.4 hours per day, not counting homework, analysis finds” (<https://www.newsweek.com/average-teenager-looks-screens-74-hours-per-day-not-counting-homework-analysis-finds-1468785>)
- Another article said, “On average, adults spend about 11 hours a day staring at some kind of screen, whether that be a computer, phone, tablet, TV or another type of electronic device. For office workers, some of that is unavoidable” (https://www.scripps.org/news_items/6626-how-much-screen-time-is-too-much)
- If most of this is at work, then it’s not as bad as it sounds
- The point is there are many things to distract us
- Some people don’t read their Bible because they are either lazy or tired
- But being busy, tired, or too lazy to read the Bible are a dangerous combination
- But you must push through it
- You must make the Bible a priority you cannot go without
- Remember Jesus was busy but He kept it a priority to spend time alone with the Father
- He is our example of how to keep the Father first
- [Matthew 14:23](#) says He spent time “by Himself to pray.”
- Other times He would “slip away...and pray” ([Lk.5:16](#)).
- Sometimes He would spend “the whole night in prayer to God” ([Lk.5:16](#)).
- Other times it would be early in the morning ([Mk.1:35](#)).

- If Jesus needed time alone with the Father, so do you and I
- So you need to read prayerfully and undistractedly
- Notice the third. We said you must...

III. Read Daily

- In our day of technology there is no excuse to not read your Bible everyday
- Listening to the Bible read can be done almost anywhere
- But to read your print Bible you have to schedule time
- If you are at places where you can't listen to the Bible, then take your print Bible with you and make moments to read
- Plus it can be a witness to others around you
- Recently I was at the skating rink with my kids and I took my print Bible with me to read over the passage I had been studying
- After I was done, a guy sitting next to me commended me for bringing my Bible and pulling it out in public and reading it but I didn't think twice about doing it
- That led to some good conversation and it reminded me people are watching whether you're aware of it or not
- Always remember that you need God's Word everyday
- You need to feed on it everyday
- Remember Jesus said in [Matthew 4:4](#) that "man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."
- Adopt the same attitude that Job had where he said in [Job 23:12](#), "I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my portion of food."
- I shared with you last week that there are many ways to read the Bible daily
- One is to use a Bible reading plan
- This helps you to stay focused
- It gives you something to follow
- It guides you each day in your reading of Scripture
- One plan that I mentioned was the 5 X 5 X 5 plan developed by the Navigators
- Did you start it last Monday?
- If you didn't use that plan, did you start with another one?

- Did you do anything?
- Did you have a “Medo-Persian hour — an unchangeable hour for our Bible Study” (Irving Jensen, cited by Finzel, p.40).

· Reading prayerfully, undistractedly and daily

· Notice now the 4th way to read...

· IV. Read Repetitiously

- Take the time to read the text a number of times
- As you read the words, verses, and passages over and over again consistently, your familiarity of them will grow
- At the end of one week, you will develop a good working understanding of what’s going on in the passages
- At the end of two weeks, your critical thinking of the verses begins to intensify
- And at the end of one month in the same section of Scripture, it becomes an old friend that you’re sad to leave when you move on to the next book of the Bible (Pickowicz)
- There are several ways you can do this:
- Take a book in the NT and read it over-and-over once a month
- You can select one of your choice or read the one we’re studying
- Break larger books into smaller sections and read each section for 30 days (eg. Revelation has 22 chapters - divide it up into 8, 7, 7)
- While you’re reading, write on a 3 X 5 card the major theme of each chapter
- Everyday when you read the book, look at the card and read through the list
- After a while you will begin to learn what’s in the chapters
- Nate Picowicz, in his book, “How to Eat Your Bible” says instead of reading it once a day for 30 days, you could read it in less time by reading it 30 times in less than 30 days.
- I started this past week reading Mark with you and decided to read it in two print versions, the NASB and the LSB
- Then I listen to it in the NIV and ESV
- I’m also going back over it and making note of the subject matter in each chapter
- If you want to spread out your repetitious reading, Nate Pickowicz had developed a 7 year plan
- He started with the 30 day plan but altered it a bit for his reading
- You can do the same but make it a priority to read the Bible repetitiously

- We learn best by repetition
 - God repeats the same truths over and over in the Bible
 - I was reading this week that in order to put things in your long term memory you have to read it several times for several days
 - In [Genesis 41:32](#) God repeated a dream to Pharaoh twice to show that “the matter is confirmed by God, and God will quickly bring it about”
 - [Deuteronomy 5](#) is a repeat of the 10 Commandments
 - The Bible speaks of the virgin birth of Jesus in [Matthew 1:23, 25](#); [Luke 1:27, 34](#).
 - The Bible speaks of the crucifixion of Christ in all four gospels, Acts, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews and Revelation
 - The Bible speaks about the deity of Christ over 100 times
 - The Bible also talks about salvation over 100 times
 - The point is God uses repetition and you should too
- So we must read the Bible prayerfully, undistractedly, daily, repetitiously, and last...

V. Read Carefully

- “Don’t hurry as you read the passage. Take as much time as is necessary.”
- A cursory Google search will reveal a plethora of articles about how to read
- People often struggle with practicing the right method of reading in order to better understand the text in front of them
- What is the best approach? Slow or fast? Scanning or searching?
- In the Bible we find the Scripture read out loud - [Acts 8:30](#), “And Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?””
- We also find the Bible read publicly in the assembly when believers met, whether it was in a synagogue or church
- [Acts 13:15](#), “And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.””
- [Colossians 4:16](#), “And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.”
- [1 Thessalonians 5:27](#), “I implore you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.”
- [1 Timothy 4:13](#), “Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.”

- While you may desire to explore the theories behind the practice of reading, for the purpose of Bible study, I encourage you to vary your approach
- Perhaps start by reading the text at a comfortable pace in order to get the context and the flow of what's written
- Then when you have a general sense of the content, go back and read more slowly to begin to examine it more deeply (Pickowicz)
- Rudyard Kipling said “I kept six honest serving men; they taught me all I knew; their names are *what* and *why* and *when* and *how* and *where* and *who*. I sent them over land and sea, I sent them east and west; but after they have worked for me I've given them all a rest” (quoted by Jerry Vines, Sermon Preparation)
- Careful reading involves questions
- As you read the Bible you will have many questions but remember the Bible also give the answers
- You will discover that as you read the ENTIRE Bible
- Martin Luther said, “I study my Bible as I gather apples. First, I shake the whole tree that the ripest might fall. Then I shake each limb, and when I have shaken each limb, I shake each branch and every twig. Then I look under every leaf. I search the Bible as a whole like shaking the whole tree. Then I shake every limb—study book after book. Then I shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters when they do not break the sense. Then I shake every twig, or a careful study of the paragraphs and sentences and words and their meanings.” (E7700I)
- Another word that describes careful reading is the word “assiduously”
- That means with great care, attention, and persistence
- To read the Scriptures assiduously means that you approach the texts with great care, intense scrutiny, and unrelenting vigor
- It's where you grab a verse and wrestle with it until you understand why it's there
- Eighteenth-century New England pastor Jonathan Edwards offered this encouragement: “Be assiduous in reading the holy Scriptures. This is the fountain whence all knowledge in divinity must be derived. Therefore let not this treasure lie by you neglected” (Pickowicz)
- Now after you have read prayerfully, undistractedly, daily, repetitiously, and carefully, you now must...

VI. Memorize the Bible

- Dallas Willard, professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern California, wrote, “Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a

fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth. That's where you need it! How does it get in your mouth? Memorization" ("Spiritual Formation in Christ for the Whole Life and Whole Person" in *Vocatio*, Vol. 12, no. 2, Spring, 2001, 7).

- Chuck Swindoll wrote, "I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture. . . . No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified" (*Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], 61).
- Scripture memory has many benefits
- One is you will remember what you read
- Another benefit is it will prevent you from sinning - [Psalm 119:11](#), "Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You."
- It will also teach and admonish you - [Colossians 3:16](#), "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God."
- This was the practice of the Israelites
- They were told in [Deuteronomy 6:6-9](#), "6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as phylacteries between your eyes. 9 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."
- [Deuteronomy 11:18](#), "You shall therefore place these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as phylacteries between your eyes."
- Jesus quoted Scripture from memory when being tempted by the devil
- He said in [Matthew 4:4](#), "But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'""
- He said again in [Matthew 4:7](#), "Jesus said to him, "Again, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'""
- Memorization helps another step...meditation

• You must also...

VII. Meditate on the Bible

- D. M. Howard says, “The idea of meditating here is not the one commonly familiar in the late twentieth century, namely, of emptying the mind and concentrating on nothing or on self or on visualizations of various types; much of this type of meditation is indebted to Eastern mystic religions. Rather, the Old Testament concept of meditation involves two things: first, a focus upon God Himself ([Ps.63:6](#)[Hb.7]), His works ([Pss 77:12](#)[Hb.13]; 143:5), or His law ([Josh 1:8](#); [Ps 1:2](#)), and second, an activity that was done aloud” (The New American Commentary: Joshua).
- Before we look closer at *the object and purpose of meditation*, let’s zero in more on *what it means to meditate*.
- Webster’s dictionary defines “meditate” as “to dwell on anything in thought; to contemplate; to study; to turn or revolve any subject in the mind.”
- In short, it is “to focus one’s thoughts on; reflect on or ponder over.”
- The Hebrew word, hagah, means, “to murmur, whisper; hence the inner whispering of the heart” (Vincent).
- The Greek word, meleta, means, “to revolve in the mind, imagine.”
- We could say then that “Meditation is a talking within the mind, and issues in speech” (Vincent).
- It’s what David did in [Psalm 103:1-4](#) when he said to himself: “Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies.”
- In [Philippians 4:8](#), Paul said to “think on these things.”
- In God’s charge to Joshua, he was to constantly “think,” “talk within his mind” the “Book of the Law” so that he would “do it.”
- “The Book of the Law” is a reference to Scripture, specifically here, Genesis through Deuteronomy.
- “Simply memorizing or quoting Scripture is not enough; meditation involves mature reflection on the Word of God, and it is the basis for spiritual growth” (KJV Bible Commentary).
- John Calvin said, “Whenever [meditation on the Law] is intermitted [ceased at intervals], even for a short time, many errors readily creep in, and the memory becomes rusted” (Calvin’s Commentaries: Joshua)
- [Psalm 1:1-3](#) reveals this as being the way of the righteous [“in His law he meditates day and night”]
- He “meditate(s) on Your precepts” ([Ps.119:15](#))
- He “meditate(s) on Your statutes” ([Ps.119:48](#))

- He meditates on Your “testimonies” ([Ps.119:99](#))
- He “meditate(s) on Your word” ([Ps.119:148](#))
- God’s Word is the object of his affection
- [Psalm 119:97](#) says, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.”
- This is the activity of the preacher ([1 Tim.4:15](#)). He is to give constant “attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (v.13)
- He is to “meditate on these things; give [himself] entirely to them, that [his] progress may be evident to all.”
- The word “Mediate” (meletao) translated “take pains with” in the NASB “carries the idea of thinking through beforehand, planning, strategizing, or premeditating. When not involved in ministry, the excellent minister is preparing, praying, or planning for it” (John MacArthur, 1 Timothy, p.180)
- In other words, he is “consumed by his work” (Ibid.)
- So meditating on God’s Word will help us remember what we have read
- It will keep us from forgetting God’s Word
- The psalmist said in [Psalm 119:15-16](#), “15 I will muse [meditate] upon Your precepts And look upon Your ways. 16 I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.”
- It also keeps us from sinning against God
- [Psalm 119:11](#), “Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.”
- William Bridge said, “Meditation will keep your hearts and souls from sinful thoughts. When the vessel is full you can put in no more. . . . If the heart be full of sinful thoughts, there is no room for holy and heavenly thoughts: if the heart be full of holy and heavenly thoughts by meditation, there is no room for evil and sinful thoughts” (Thomas, I. The golden treasury of Puritan quotations).
- Meditation also teaches us to fear God
- [Deuteronomy 17:19](#), “And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to carefully observe all the words of this law and these statutes,”

CONCLUSION

- This is God’s Word
- We need to remember that
- Paul said to Timothy in [2 Timothy 3:14-17](#), “14 But you, continue in the things you learned and became convinced of, knowing from whom you learned them, 15 and that from childhood

you have known the sacred writings which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be equipped, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

- Bible reading, memorization, and meditation is work
- But it will help you in understanding God’s Word, in prayer, in meditation, in evangelism, and in spiritual warfare
- So to get the most out of it, read it prayerfully, undistractedly, daily, repetitiously and carefully
- And then memorize and meditate on it
- [Romans 15:4](#), “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through the perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”
- If you haven’t made a commitment to read the Bible, make it today
- This will inform you, comfort you and give you hope because you will know what God’s Word says
- And in knowing what it says and what it means are you then able to do it
- None of this makes any sense without a relationship with Jesus Christ
- When the disciples asked Jesus in [Matthew 13:10](#), “Why do You speak to them in parables?”
- He said in verse 11, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.”
- If you want to know God’s Word, then you must commit your life to Christ
- You cannot understand apart from Him
- Let’s pray