

THE BIBLE

Lesson 4

The Receiving and Handling Of the Bible

Scripture Reading: Isa. 34:16; Acts 17:11; Eph. 6:17-18; Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:10; 2 Tim. 2:15; 4:2

I. “Seek from the book of Jehovah and read”—Isa. 34:16a:

- A. We need to have a private time to read the Word; we need to lay a good foundation in the Word of God by reading through it consecutively from Genesis to Revelation.
- B. Read book after book without selection, choice, or preference; try to read the Bible through once every year or every two years.
- C. The best way to read the Bible is to read it daily (Acts 17:11) and morning is the best time to read the Bible (Psa. 119:147).
- D. The first step we should take when we open the Scriptures is to prepare ourselves to contact God—cf. John 5:39-40:
 1. When we come to the Bible, we have the sweet consciousness that we are coming to our God, our Father, our Lord.
 2. Whenever we come to the Word, it would be good to pray, “Lord grant me a sweet taste for Your Word. Make it so precious to me”; if we have this taste for the Word, surely it will bring us life.
- E. It is important to build up the habit of reading the Word; if you build up the habit of reading the Word, you will be healthy spiritually and you will grow.

II. “Receive...the word of God, by means of all prayer”—Eph. 6:17-18a:

- A. We should not simply have one way of prayer, but every means of prayer, exercising our spirit to pray in various ways to take the Word of God—v. 18.
- B. Pray-reading the word—vv. 17-18:
 1. There is no need for us to pray only after we understand some words in the Bible, we should simply pray-read the Bible.
 2. We should exercise our spirit to pray-read; if we pray-read a portion of the Word for five to ten minutes, we will receive some nourishment from the word.
 3. By pray-reading the Word, we will truly understand it; furthermore, we will receive nourishment and strengthening within, which will empower us and give us life all the time.
- C. Singing or sing-reading the word—Col. 3:16; cf. Eph. 5:18-19:
 1. The way to live Christ is to take the Word by exercising our spirit; we must exercise our spirit by praying the Word and singing it.
 2. Let us first read the Word and then pray-read it; following this, let us sing the Word.
 3. The more we take the Word by reading, pray-reading, and especially sing-reading, the more the riches of the Word will saturate us and make us one with the Lord.
- D. Musing on the word—Psalm 119:10:
 1. The Hebrew word for muse, or meditate, implies to bow down, to converse with oneself, and to utter; according to the Old Testament, to meditate on the Word of God is to enjoy it by musing upon it.

2. To muse upon the Word is to “chew the cud,” like a cow eating grass (Lev. 11:3); as we muse upon the Word of God, we should “chew the cud”:
 - a. If we take in the Word too quickly, we shall not have very much enjoyment; but if we “chew the cud” as we take in the Word, our enjoyment will increase.
 - b. When we muse upon the Word of God, enjoying it and even chewing it as a cow chews the cud, we shall spontaneously pray.
3. Furthermore, we may converse with ourselves or begin to praise the Lord; we may be so inspired by the Word that we want to shout our praises to the Lord.
4. Usually musing upon the Word will be slower and finer than pray-reading the Word.
5. Musing upon the Word in this way is even richer, broader, and more inclusive than pray-reading, for it includes prayer, worship, enjoyment, conversation, bowing down, and even lifting up our hands to receive God’s word. It also includes rejoicing, praising, shouting, and even weeping before the Lord.

III. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth”—2 Tim. 2:15:

- A. We need a thorough study of the divine word; the believers need to always learn and to come to the full knowledge of the truth—1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:15.
- B. The best way to be constituted with the New Testament truths, the best way to gain the knowledge of God’s New Testament economy is to use the Recovery Version with the notes and the Life-study messages:
 1. In order to be constituted with the truth, we need to pray-read and then study.
 2. We need to consider the text of the Recovery Version with the notes and the life-study messages as a textbook; we must study them as a textbook.
 3. We need to acquire the crucial points of the truth and a bird’s-eye view of the Scriptures.
- C. We need to build up a habit of spending time in the Word; we should help the saints to build up a practice or a habit that every day they would spend at least thirty minutes in the Word.

IV. “Speak to the people all the words of this life”—Acts 5:20:

- A. God’s heart is that we would speak for Him; everyone must speak—Num. 11:29; 1 Cor. 14:31.
- B. We should not speak negatively but always speak positively; we should no longer gossip, criticize, or speak idly; we should simply speak Christ, speak grace, speak mercy, speak God, and speak the holy Word—Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6.
- C. We have to realize that as believers we all have been made the witnesses of the living Christ (Acts 1:8); witnesses are speakers.
- D. Acts 8:1 tells us that all the thousands of new believers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria as a result of a great persecution; those who were scattered preached the good news of the word wherever they went—v. 4.
- E. Just speak the word of Christ; let the word of Christ dwell in you—Col. 3:16:
 1. We can preach the word in season and out of season—2 Tim. 4:2.
 2. We can speak Christ with hymns—Col. 3:16.
 3. We can practice the divine speaking by using the life-studies in the home meetings.
 4. We can practice to prophesy, to speak for the Lord and speak forth the Lord, for the building up of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 14:31, 26.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

Reading Daily

1. “Examining the Scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11).

Many can testify that the best way to read the Bible is to read it daily. Since the Bible is closely related to our living and actions, we need it in every area of our life. Therefore, we should read the Bible daily. Since the Bible is food for our spiritual life, we must receive spiritual nourishment from it daily. We need physical nourishment every day, and we similarly need spiritual nourishment every day. Just as we need to eat physical food every day, we need to read the Bible every day. We are healthy when we eat food every day, and we are healthy when we read the Bible every day. We should not eat food one day and then fast for three days. Likewise, we should not read the Bible in fits and starts. Just as our food should be apportioned to us throughout the day, our Bible reading should be apportioned in a measured and daily way. We should not receive too much or too little, reading too much one day and very little the next.

Furthermore, eating at specific times is the most healthy way to eat. Similarly, we should set aside specific times to read the Bible every day. Just as it is best for our body to eat a specific amount of food at specific times every day, it is best for our spirit to read a specific amount of the Bible at specific times every day. May we practice this by the Lord’s grace...

Asking the Lord to Open Our Mind

1. “Open my eyes that I may behold / Wondrous things” (Psa. 119:18; see also Luke 24:45).

We should not depend merely on our own intellect to read the Bible. We must ask the Lord to open our mind so that we might understand the truth in the Word and behold wondrous things. If we want to understand and know the Bible, we need an opened mind and opened eyes. Only the Lord can open our mind and eyes; therefore, we must ask the Lord.

Seeking the Enlightenment of the Holy Spirit

1. “Revealed them through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10).

Even though the Bible has been revealed through the Holy Spirit, there are yet many deep and mysterious things of God in the Bible that only the Spirit can search out and reveal to us. The depths of the Bible are out of God, of God, and concerning God. No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Therefore, if we want to read the Bible and understand it, we must seek the Spirit’s enlightenment. Our natural intellect is unable to understand the Bible. We must be enlightened by the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit’s revelation so that we can understand the Bible. Therefore, when we read the Bible, we should not depend on our intelligence but seek the enlightenment and revelation of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, if we want to understand the Bible, we need to do more than seek the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit; we also need to live in the Holy Spirit and become a spiritual person. The word of the Bible is a spiritual word, and the Bible speaks of spiritual matters. Only those who are spiritual can understand spiritual words and matters. Certain kinds of people understand certain kinds of words and matters. It takes a spiritual person to understand spiritual words, and it takes a spiritual person to understand spiritual matters. Only the spiritual can understand the spiritual. Since the Bible is spiritual, we must be spiritual in order to understand the words that it contains. The degree of our understanding of the Bible is based on the degree of our spirituality. Therefore, if we want to understand the Bible, we must be spiritual, learn to live in the Spirit, and become a spiritual person.

Turning Our Heart to the Lord

1. “Whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” (2 Cor. 3:16).

We must not only be spiritual to read the Bible, but we must turn our heart to the Lord. Whether we understand the Bible and receive light when we read it depends on our spiritual condition and our heart. There will be a problem if our spirit is not right, and there will be a problem if our heart is not right. If we want to understand the Bible when we read it, our heart must turn to the Lord. If our heart is not turned to the Lord, it will be difficult for us to understand the Bible and see its light; there will be a veil on our heart that prevents us from seeing the light in the Bible. Once our heart turns to the Lord, however, the veil is taken away. Then we will see the Lord in the light of His Word, and we will understand and know the Bible. If we want to know the Bible, we must turn our heart to the Lord; that is, we must turn away from every person, thing, and matter outside of the Lord and return to the Lord.

Resolving to Do His Will

1. “If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching” (John 7:17).

When we read the Bible, we must resolve to do His will in order to understand the Word. The Lord does not reveal His teachings to those who have no heart to keep them. He makes them known to those who have a heart to keep them and who resolve to keep them. Therefore, we must be a person of such resolve in order to understand the words in the Bible.

Searching and Studying

1. “Search”; “Study diligently” (John 5:39...)

The Bible is a book that must be searched and studied. This requires time and effort, so we need to pay the price. Anyone who is not willing to pay the price to spend the time and make the effort to diligently search and study the Bible will not be able to understand much of the Bible, especially its depths. If we read the Bible in a light way, we will not understand much. We must make an effort to search and diligently study the Bible in order to truly understand.

The Bible is too rich and mysterious. It really is worthy of searching and study. Even though many have spent much time to study the Bible throughout the ages, there are still many portions that need to be studied. Many who have Ph.D.s, who have spent an entire lifetime carefully studying the Bible, feel as if they are trying to measure the ocean with a dipper. Some very particular and special methods have been used to study the Bible throughout the ages. For example, the author of Young’s Concordance counted every Hebrew and Greek word in the Old and New Testaments. Moreover, he counted how many times each word was used in the original language (either Hebrew or Greek), recorded their meaning, and then detailed how these words were translated into English in the King James Version, including how many times each translated word was used and the location of each translated word. Then he compiled these words into an alphabetical concordance so that they could be located easily. It is difficult to say how much time and effort was put into this matter. Others calculated the numbers represented by every letter of every word in the Old Testament Hebrew and the New Testament Greek. (In Hebrew and Greek, each letter stands for a number.) They counted the letters one by one and totaled their numerical value; they discovered that in both the Old and New Testaments, the numeric total of all the letters of all the words is divisible by seven. This means that the numeric total of every word in every verse in every chapter in every book of the Bible is divisible by seven. This is a truly marvelous kind of study, and it took much time and effort. Others have also spent much time and effort. May we be willing to take the time to study the Bible. May there be some among us who are willing to rise up and apply special effort to study this marvelous book.

Meditating and Considering

1. **“Meditates by day and by night”; “Muse upon”; “Consider”** (Psa. 1:2; 119:15, 95; see also Matt. 9:13).

When we read the Bible, we need to meditate and consider. Sometimes we need to muse upon the Word. This requires carefulness and time. It also requires quiet concentration. Many times we need to meditate, consider carefully, or concentrate quietly in order to understand the Bible and touch its essence.

Believing

1. **“Slow of heart to believe”** (Luke 24:25; see also John 2:22).

We must believe when we read the Bible. Sometimes we understand, and then we believe and receive. Sometimes we believe and receive, and then we understand. In any case, we must always believe. Whoever does not read the Bible in faith, whoever is slow of heart to believe, cannot understand the Bible in a clear way. Even if we could understand some portion, we would not receive much benefit. We must mix faith with the word of the Bible in order to understand the Bible and receive the benefit (Heb. 4:2).

Adding Prayer

1. **“Cried out...hoped”** (Psa. 119:147).

Reading the Bible also requires cooperation through prayer. Reading the Bible and prayer cannot be separated. Therefore, the early psalmists called on the Lord on the one hand and hoped in the Lord’s word on the other. Before we read the Bible, we should pray and ask the Lord to cleanse us, to open the eyes of our heart, to prepare our spirit, and to open His Word and shine His light upon it to reveal His truth in it by the Spirit. As we read, we should turn the inspiration that we receive into prayer, praying for ourselves and for others. After we finish reading, we need to continue to pray, asking the Lord to preserve what we have understood so that we might keep it in faith and love and to give us strength and grace so that we might practice what we have seen. Thus, reading the Bible should begin with prayer, be accompanied by prayer, and end with prayer. Reading the Bible must be accompanied by prayer.

Praying and Reading

1. **“Receive...the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition”** (Eph. 6:17-18).

Our reading of the Bible should not only be with prayer but should be mingled with prayer. Any portion or sentence of the Bible can become our prayer. This is not simply to read the word of the Bible; this is to pray the word of the Bible. We should not use our mind to understand the Word but our spirit to taste and chew a portion of the Word so that it becomes our supply. Paul refers to receiving the word of God by means of all prayer and petition in Ephesians 6:17-18. This kind of praying and reading, that is, pray-reading, enables us to not only understand the true spiritual meaning of the Bible—the will of God—but also to enjoy the reality of the content of the Bible—God Himself. This is the most beneficial way to read the Bible for our spiritual growth.

Letting the Word Dwell in Us

1. **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom”** (Col. 3:16; see also Psa. 119:98).

We should let the word dwell in us when we read the Bible. If we read it and forget it, it will be difficult for us to thoroughly understand the Word. If we let the important points, the important chapters and verses, and the important truths of the Bible dwell in us, the Holy Spirit can enable us to understand the meaning of the Bible. Moreover, He can reveal the truths of the Bible to us at any time and in any place. Therefore, we must let the word of the Bible dwell in us richly in all wisdom and by all means. Remembering the Bible and memorizing the Bible are necessary to reading the Bible and a way to read the Bible. We should practice this, especially the young brothers and sisters. We should memorize one book of the Bible or choose a few golden

verses from our daily reading to remember and memorize. Regardless of how well we remember or memorize the Word, this is always beneficial. (*Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, Vol. 3, Ch. 31, pp. 486-493)

References and Further Reading:

1. *Life Messages, Vol. 1*, Chapters 2, 10-11.
2. *Pray-reading the Word*.
3. *Life-study of Exodus*, Messages 56 and 57.