

# Reading That Incites Thinking

by A.W. Tozer

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*True spiritual growth requires a willingness to learn and grow, and a humble and teachable spirit.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 1:5, Proverbs 18:15, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:15, James 1:5

**Topics:** "Critical Thinking", "Self-Education"

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## Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and self-education in his sermon 'Reading That Incites Thinking.' He recounts a conversation between Dr. Samuel Johnson and a king, highlighting that reading should stimulate deeper thought rather than just be a passive activity. Tozer argues that while reading is valuable, true understanding and wisdom come from within, and that ministers should be well-read to effectively teach their congregations. He warns against arrogance in ignorance, suggesting that humility and a willingness to learn are essential for spiritual leaders. Ultimately, Tozer encourages Christians to engage with their faith actively and thoughtfully.

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## Transcript

When the noted scholar Dr. Samuel Johnson visited the king, the two sat for a while before the fire in silence. Then the king said, "I suppose, Dr. Johnson, that you read a great deal." "Yes, Sire," replied Johnson, "but I think a great deal more." One of the English poets--I believe it was Coleridge--boasted to a Quaker lady about his study habits. He began his studies the instant he got up in the morning: while he dressed he memorized poetry; he studied his Greek vocabulary while he shaved; and so to the end of the day. The lady was unimpressed. "Friend," she asked reproachfully, "when does thee think?"

Apart from technical information which, of course, must be received from others, a man can teach himself much more than he can learn from books. A good book should do no more than prime the pump. After that the water will flow up from within as long as we keep the handle working and long after the original cup of water has been forgotten.

All else being equal it is desirable that Christians, especially ministers of the gospel, should be widely read. It is a disagreeable experience to present oneself before a teacher for religious instruction and discover in less than three minutes that the said teacher should have changed places with his listeners and learned from them rather than they from him. If he is a humble man and sticks close to the small plot of ground with which he is familiar, he may, if he loves God and men, succeed in ministering to the spiritual needs of his flock. If, however, his ignorance is exceeded by his arrogance, then God help his hearers. If he boasts of his ignorance and scorns learning, show me the nearest exit! I can learn more

from a child laughing on the lawn or a cloud passing overhead.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/reading-that-incites-thinking/>

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