

Guidelines for Growth - Part 3

by J. Vernon McGee

The Spirit of God must be our teacher in order to understand the Bible and to grow in our faith.

Duration: 1:12:33

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:7-8, Psalm 36:9, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 2:11

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Biblical Meditation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of meditating on the Word of God and how television can distract families from spiritual growth. He highlights the decline in biblical knowledge among children and the need for meditation on God's Word to combat the indifference towards it in churches. The speaker also discusses the importance of obedience to God's commands and the impact of living a life that reflects the Gospel. Lastly, he encourages the audience to not only read, study, and meditate on the Bible but also to pass it on to others, as this is crucial for continued spiritual growth.

Transcript

May I say to you, I saw a layman when I was pastor and have been pastor here in Southern California. I've seen several laymen that have lost their zeal for the things of God. Men that I found out I couldn't depend on.

There was one man who came to me as he began a new business and he said, I'm going to support your radio. And he did for a while until he became very successful. And then he quit supporting radio.

You think I'm going to pray for that man to be more successful in business? No, my friend. May I say to you, Paul did not pray that the Ephesians would become wealthy. Well, you say, well, what in the world did he pray for? He prayed this.

He says, Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you making mention of you in my prayers. Now, what in the world is Paul going to pray for? Listen, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

That's Ephesians 1, 17, 18. Did you notice he didn't pray for anything physical? He prayed that they might have wisdom in the revelation of the knowledge of him. That is, that the Spirit of God might be their

teacher, opening the Word of God to their hearts and lives.

And may I say this to you, and I'm saying it very sincerely and very candidly. I trust you will pray for this radio ministry. I trust you'll pray for the financial part because I'll be very frank with you.

We live in a very cold-blooded world today as far as business is concerned, and that even among Christians. You don't pay your bills today, you're in trouble. And we have to pay for radio, and we do depend on our listeners.

Now, that's putting it just brutally frank, but that's the way it is. And I do encourage people to pray for the ministry. But let me tell you something most of all, and especially as we begin this five-year program.

Will you pray that this poor preacher might have his eyes open, and as we go through this book, that the Spirit of God might be the teacher? I confess to you very frankly, we're not going to get anywhere at all if the Spirit of God is not our teacher. This is a closed book. And it's the reason today that so many just don't get anything out of it.

It's simply because they're not letting the Spirit of God teach them. Now, Paul makes it very clear that he was praying for that. And this is his first prayer for these people, that they might have a wisdom and an understanding of the revelation of the knowledge of him.

And the revelation is in the book here. Now, he wanted them to know the Word of God. He wanted their eyes, their understanding to be enlightened.

And you will recall that he also said to the Corinthians that eye hath not seen. Therefore, your eyes got to be open if you're going to see it. And that your ear hath not heard.

And it just can't come through the ear gate even on the radio. And I have discovered this after quite a few years of being a minister. I find out that some people hear a message and they just turn the radio off.

They say, that poor fellow, he's not saying anything. Then somebody else, why, they find in it a great blessing. Well, what's the difference? Well, the difference has to be, not in the message, because it has to be either one or the other.

But the very interesting thing is, it's both. To the man who said it was foolishness unto him, well, it was foolishness unto him. It actually was.

And to the man, frankly, that it was a great blessing to his heart, well, isn't that what Paul said again to the Corinthians? For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. But unto us that are saved, it is the power of God unto salvation. Now, isn't that an amazing thing? That one person, he hears one thing, and another person hears something else.

What is the difference? The difference is the fact that the Spirit of God is the one that does the teaching. And that's the reason we ought to always, before you begin the study of the Word of God, friends, you ought to begin with prayer. Ask the Spirit of God to open your heart that you may hear the still small voice of the Son of God.

You remember that crowd there that day, a voice out of heaven said, this is my beloved Son. And he says, I've heard you and I'll hear you again. And there was some that was standing there, and you know what they said? They said it thundered.

It was natural. And somebody else, they heard the Spirit of God speaking to the Son of God. May I say to you, makes all the difference in the world today.

And again, we're handling a supernatural book. Don't forget that. It's a human book.

It's got in it all kinds of things that deal with us human beings, because it was written to us. And God wanted to communicate to us, and he gave us this. And he speaks our language.

He speaks right to our hearts. He speaks to meet our needs today, and that's so important to see. Now, Paul writes to the Corinthians, and he says this.

We've looked at this before. Now ye have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God, which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Now, you see, that's the reason that the Spirit of God must be our teacher, because we could never know the things of God unless the Spirit of God were our teacher. Now, I want to begin today with a very interesting verse of scripture. I have read now from 1 Corinthians 2 on two separate occasions when we were looking at the book, and now since we have been considering this matter of always begin with prayer, but I bypassed one verse.

I read before this verse, I read after this verse, but did not read it. I'd like to read it today, and that's verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 2. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Now, that puts in a very succinct and certainly in an understandable manner of why the Spirit of God must be our teacher, because you and I understand each other, but we do not understand God.

That is normally and naturally. Only the Spirit of God can reveal the things of God to us. Now, I mean that you and I understand each other.

I believe that today that it's perfect nonsense to talk about that we've got a generation today that we can't communicate with. We have the generation gap today. I recognize that's always been true, that it's difficult for an older person and a younger person to see eye to eye, but that's no reason why they can't communicate one with the other.

We can communicate one with another because we're all human beings. We understand each other, but I frankly don't understand God unless it's revealed to me. I don't know how God feels.

I've often wondered, at least I used to wonder, well, I wonder how he'd feel at a funeral. Well, go with the Lord Jesus. He went to several funerals.

He always broke up a funeral, by the way, but I find him there at the funeral of Lazarus saying, Jesus, well, I know how he feels today. I know how he feels about many things because the Spirit of God and the Word of God has revealed this to us today. No man knoweth the things of a man, for what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him.

When I was Pastor in Nashville, Tennessee, I got up one bright morning and looked out my window, and during the night about five inches of snow had fallen and had covered up all of the ugliness that was around, the trees that had lost their leaves, the grass that was dead. It was all covered with a beautiful white blanket. I sat upstairs in my study looking out over the scene, and right across the street from me, that is the same side that I was on, but directly across where the back end of his house was the same way mine was.

I hope I made that clear. And I noticed this elder of mine who lived there, he came out on his porch, and he had two coal scuttles filled with ashes. He was going out to the alleyway to empty them there in a place that was put there for that purpose.

And I saw him stop and look over the landscape, and I just smiled because I knew how he felt. You know how he felt? Just like I felt, looking out on that snow that had fallen during the night. And when he started down the steps, though, he slipped and fell.

And he didn't want to, you know, spill the ashes, so he just held them out. And I want to tell you, he hit one of those steps with a real bump. And I watched him and I couldn't help but laugh.

I guess if he'd broken his neck, I would have laughed. But I noticed that he looked around and he was satisfied nobody had seen him. So he got up with great satisfaction, and he started out again.

You know, he got about halfway out on the sidewalk, and we had a repeat performance, only this time he fell much farther because it was all the way to the sidewalk. And it looked to me like he bounced when he hit. And this time he really scanned the landscape.

He didn't want anybody to see what he had done, you see. And I knew how he felt. I'd feel the same way, be embarrassed.

And so I laughed. I couldn't help but laugh. He got up and he looked over the landscape.

He went out and emptied his ashes, and he started back and he got back to the porch, and he looked over the landscape again. I don't think anybody had seen him fall, at least twice. And so I didn't say a word until Sunday morning.

And when he was sitting in church, when I came in, I went right by where he sat. And I leaned down and I said, you sure did look funny yesterday carrying out the ashes. And he looked at me in amazement.

He said, did you see me? And I said, yes. And he said, well, I didn't think anybody saw me. And I said, I thought that.

I said, I knew exactly how you felt. You see, he had a human spirit. I have a human spirit.

We understand each other. And you and I understand each other, you see. And I don't think there's too much of a generation gap anywhere because I think human beings understand each other.

But who can understand God? Well, the point is, Paul says, the Spirit of God. And that's the reason that the Holy Spirit teacheth us comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Now, Renan, the French skeptic, he made an attack on the Word of God.

I'm sure many of you have heard that or know that. Did you know that he wrote A Life of Christ? And his book is divided into two sections. One is the historical section.

The other is the interpretation of Christ. And as far as the first part is concerned, there probably has never been written a more brilliant life of Christ by any person. But his interpretation of Christ is positively absurd.

I'm of the opinion that a 12-year-old Sunday school boy could do better. Now, what's the explanation of that? Well, the Spirit of God doesn't need to teach you history, doesn't need to teach you facts that you can dig out for yourself. A very clever mind can dig all these out, and that's exactly what he had done.

He'd made a real study. But the interpretation is altogether different. The Spirit of God has to do the interpreting, and he alone must be the teacher to lead and guide us into all truth.

We must have the Spirit of God to open our eyes to see. The story is told of Holman Hunt, the great artist, who, by the way, was a Christian, and he had one time a one-man art show, and he had there a painting of a sunset. And it was a brilliant thing, a beautiful thing.

A lady came by. She was rather a country bumpkin, and she looked it over, and it was a startling thing to her, too. But she made this comment.

She said, whoever saw a sunset like that? And Holman Hunt, who was there, just happened to overhear what she said, and he replied. He said, Madam, don't you wish you could see one like that? You know, there are many folk today who look at the Word of God, they read the Bible, they don't really see anything. They marvel and wonder how anyone could be interested in it.

You find today many people. I had a member of my own church make this statement. My, I wouldn't waste my time coming to Bible study on Thursday night.

I'd have to drive 15 miles. Well, that party will drive more than 15 miles to see the Dodgers play or the Lakers play in a game, and they go much farther than that for some little silly party that they put on. But no, not for Bible study.

May I say to you, only the Spirit of God can reveal the wonders of the book to you. And that, by the way, makes you wonder about some of our church folk. I take the position today that the Bible is the real test of a believer, and his attitude and relationship to the book is very important and should be taken in consideration.

Now, again, let me read a passage of Scripture that's very important, only I'm going to read all of it this time. In this connection, it's John 16, 12 through 16. The Lord Himself made this statement, "...I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.

How be it when he, the Spirit of truth, is come? He'll guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he'll show you things to come. He shall glorify me, he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine.

Therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me, and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." You see, the Lord Jesus is saying that we're to ask. He has many things for us, and He wants to reveal these things to us by the Holy

Spirit.

And He said in John 14, 26, "...but the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Now the Holy Spirit is the Teacher, and He must be the one to lead us, and to guide us into all truth. If you ever learn anything, my beloved, through this Bible study program that we're beginning now in just a few days to initiate, it will not be because this poor preacher is the Teacher. It'll be because the Spirit of God is opening up the Word of God to you, and you know what? We're going to depend on Him to do just that.

This is the first guideline. Begin with prayer. Ask the Spirit of God to be your Teacher.

Now the second guideline may seem just a little oversimplified, and that is, read the Bible. Read the Bible. Someone asked a great Shakespearean scholar years ago, says, how do you study Shakespeare? And his answer was very brief and terse.

Read Shakespeare. I'd say to you, read the Word of God. You want to know what the Bible has to say, read the Bible.

And may I inject this also. We have already suggested to you to listen to the broadcast, to get the notes, and to read the passage under consideration. Let me come back now and say, regardless of whether you get the notes or regardless of whether you hear the broadcast, it's all important to read what the Bible has to say, and it's very important.

It is said of Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, and he, I think, has written some very wonderful and helpful books on the Bible. He has a series of books called Living Messages of the Books of the Bible. It's on each one of the 66 books of the Bible.

When I started out as a student, I know of nothing that had more influence on my study of the Word than these books. Now it was said of him that he would not put a pen to paper in writing these books until he had read a particular book of the Bible through 50 times. Think of that, my friend.

So don't be weary in well-doing. Just read the Word of God. If you don't get it the first time, read it the second time.

If you don't get it the second time, read it the third time. And if you don't get it the third time, just keep on reading it. And let me say this, you'll not be wasting your time.

You and I are to get the facts of the Word of God. And what you and I can dig out for ourselves, I don't think the Spirit of God is going to reveal to us. I just don't believe that.

I think that the Bible is a divine book. But remember, I also said it's a human book. And if you are going to learn certain things about the Bible, you will just have to, if you please, you're just going to have to study those things.

You're going to have to read. You're going to have to read the Bible, and read it sometimes again and again. Here's a very interesting statement that I've lifted out of Nehemiah.

It's back in Nehemiah 8, the first three verses. And it's that great Bible reading that took place when they put up a pulpit before the water gate, and Ezra read there. Let me read this to you.

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate. And they spake unto Ezra the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both the men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate, from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And the very interesting thing in this connection is that he put out among the people certain men.

They were of the tribe of Levi. And these men went among the people, and they explained the Bible. I assume from the way that the count is given that what actually took place was that these men were stationed in certain areas, and then Ezra would read a certain portion, and then he would stop.

And the people that had listened, they would be given an opportunity to ask questions. That is, of these that were stationed out there to explain the Bible to them, you see. And we are told, I'm reading now verse 7 of chapter 8 of Nehemiah, these caused the people to understand the law, and the people stood in their place.

Now verse 8 is a very important verse. So they read in the book, in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. May I say to you, I used to teach a group of young theologues, young men studying for the ministry, homiletics.

That is how to preach. And one of the things I told them, learn to read the Bible distinctly, and that this was the greatest lesson that there is. Read in the book of the law distinctly.

I hate to hear anyone get up to read the Bible, and they start in like this. You don't know whether it's Chinese, or whether it's from Manchuria, that you do not know where it's come from. They don't sound like they're reading English at all.

We're to read in the book of God distinctly, and to give the sense. Now that is very simple you see, but it's very important that God's people understand the word of God. Therefore we should read the Bible.

Now they cause the people to understand, and we need to read the Bible. And there's so many distractions today from the study of the word of God. I suppose the greatest distractor that we have is the church.

The church today is made up of committees, and organizations, and banquets, and entertainments, and promotional schemes to the extent that the word of God's not even dealt with in many churches today. And many churches have disbanded the preaching service altogether. I notice that even our cosmopolitan papers here in Los Angeles have played this up, that certain churches are no longer going to have a preaching service.

They're going to have a time in which the people will be able to just express themselves, and say what they are thinking. And I can't think of anything that'll be more puerile, more nonsensical, more waste of time than that. And may I say it's a fine excuse for a lazy preacher who will not read or study the Bible to get out of preaching.

And after all I've always felt that liberalism will waste their time preaching anyway. They didn't have anything to preach, if you please. And I say that, I trust, kindly today.

But somebody needs to say these things that God says, that it's by the foolishness of preaching he's going to save man. And that means preaching and teaching the word of God. And that was the thing, you remember, Paul gave us this one song to a young preacher.

Preach the word. It's the word of God, my friend, that needs to be given out. And I quote Psalm 36 9. This is a marvelous psalm.

This is a marvelous verse. For with thee is the fountain of life. In thy light shall we see light, you see.

And it's by reading the word of God which is light. And then if we don't understand it, the Spirit of God's our teacher to lead us into all truth. So that we have now these two things that are all important.

Begin with prayer. Second, read the Bible. And now, third, study the Bible.

And again, let me quote Dr. Morgan. For years ago, someone said to him, you speak as though you are inspired. And Dr. Morgan said, inspiration is 95% perspiration.

Now may I say to you that the Bible needs to be studied. I had many years ago, several hundred students in classes in Bible. And these students were made up of all kinds of young folk.

And among them were a few very pious individuals. And I understood these young people very well after a period of time. I must confess, I didn't understand them at first.

They acted very pious. But that covered up a tremendous ignorance and vacuum relative to the word of God. And some of them would not study the night before an exam.

They always would give an excuse that they were busy in a prayer meeting somewhere or a service. And I would always be rather hard-boiled with them and say, the Lord sent you here to study the Bible and that's primary. Someone's paying your tuition.

So the thing for you to do is when an exam is coming up on the morrow, that you will know it's not the Lord's will for you to spend the night in prayer. Do it the night afterward, but not the night before. Because he wants you to study the Bible.

And I had a feeling that we had some that felt like they could sort of put the Bible underneath their pillar. And that during the night as they slept, that there would come up through the duck feathers the names of the kings of Israel and Judah. But I used to tell them, it won't come up through the duck feathers and it won't come up by you ducking it either.

You're going to have to knuckle down and study the word of God. One fellow I never shall forget in a Bible class when I was in college, he said, doctor, you've given us a section that's very dry. And the professor without even missing a step, he said to him, then dampen it a little with sweat from your brow.

May I say to you that the Bible should be studied. And it's very important that we see that and that we remember that there is certain knowledge that the spirit of God's not going to give to you. I do not think that he's revealing truth to lazy people.

If you read the Bible and don't understand and then study the Bible and that it must be studied after all, you must put it in a category with any other book. You'd never learn logarithms or geometry. You can't learn Greek by just reading a chapter in it right before you go to sleep at night.

By the way, you may be shocked when I say what I'm going to say about devotional reading of the Bible or devotional reading. And may I say that I do not encourage that type of reading at all, because I've learned over a years that a great many people who are very faithful at what they call devotional reading are very much ignorant of the Bible. To begin with, devotional reading is generally done at a time in which it ought not to be done.

I stayed with a family for over a week when I was holding meetings in a place in Middle Tennessee. And every morning at the breakfast table, we had devotions. And unfortunately, breakfast was always a little late, and Susie and Willie were rushing to get away to school.

And I'm confident they didn't even know what was read. And Dad was wanting to get away to work, and he generally made it a very brief reading and always he'd say, well, I'll read this familiar passage this morning, because we don't have much time. And believe me, we didn't.

By the time that the reading was over, these two children, they went away from the table like they were shot out of a gun. And he got out of there almost as quickly as they did, and Mother was left with the dishes. And I wondered whether she had really heard whether anything would be read.

I determined right there and then that my home we wouldn't have devotional reading. I've always tried to encourage the members of my family to read the Bible on their own. That's the only kind that is profitable.

When I was brought up, that's not the way that we studied mathematics. My dad didn't get the family around in the morning at the breakfast table and say, now we're going to have some devotional reading in mathematics. And then he'd take up the lesson that we had for the day.

I give you my word, I don't think we'd learn much in the way of mathematics, and I don't think you learn history that way. Now somebody's going to say, but I have my devotions at night after the day's over. Well, now really, don't you have it right before you go to bed? You've got one foot in bed already, one eye is already closed.

And again, you turn to a passage of scripture and you read it. I've made a point never to read the Bible at that time of night. Now I wake up sometime at night, have difficulty getting back to sleep, and I read the Bible.

And I find out, friends, it'll put you to sleep. And if it won't, one of my books will. But may I say to you, I don't think it ought to be read at times like that.

I think that you ought to read it when you have time, when you can give time to it. And if you can't give time, you ought to make time. And you ought to set apart 30 minutes or an hour.

And if you do things haphazardly like I do, then you will find out that one day you're going to read 30 minutes, the next day 5 minutes, and the next day two or three hours. I find out that's the best way to do it, that is to fit into my program. And I put down no particular rule, but I think each person ought to read it for themselves.

I think that that is the thing to do to encourage boys and girls to read the Bible. And I was delighted to find out when my daughter went away to college, and she got pretty far away from us and from other things. But I was told by a roommate that she got her Bible out and read it because that's the way we had done it in the home.

I believe that is true. Now, I know that's going to shock some folk and say, oh, I think we ought to have our devotional reading together. Well, fine, if that's the way the Lord leads you to do it, you do it that way.

But I'll guarantee you, you won't be an intelligent Bible student after 20 years by doing it like that. You have to study the Word of God. The Bible must be studied and intelligently.

You remember that Ethiopian eunuch? He was reading the scripture, and he didn't know what he was reading. And the Spirit of God got Philip to go down and join himself to the Ethiopian eunuch, and then he asked him, do you understand what you are reading? And the man was very honest. After all, he was the treasurer, and he was an honest man.

And he said what I think a great many people ought to say today. Well, how can I? I need somebody to help me here. I don't know what he's talking about.

Is Isaiah talking about himself or some other? I feel that there must be this study of the Word of God, or there'll be no understanding of it. Now, I have been deeply gratified to find that across this country and in other places, literally hundreds of Bible classes have been organized in homes where people can study the Bible, and many pastors have put in this Through the Bible program. They themselves have found it's been a blessing to them, and they have put it into their churches and asked people to study the Bible.

That is very important. It was said of John Wesley that he was a man of one book. Well, then what made him a man of one book? Well, I'll tell you what made him a man of one book.

He got up and read the Bible at four and five o'clock every morning. I'm told that he read the Bible in five different languages. Believe me, he studied the Word of God.

And you and I today need to study the Word. We need to get the meaning of the Bible, and that's very important. Now, that leads me to the fourth very important guideline for the study of the scriptures, and that is meditate on the Bible.

Meditate on the Bible. Meditation is something that God taught his people. The Word of God was to be before the children of Israel all the time so that they could meditate on it.

And let me give you that passage of scripture over in the 6th chapter of Deuteronomy, verses 6 through 9. Listen to this very carefully. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates. You see, the Word of God was to be kept before them.

It was to be written in their homes on the doorposts and the lintel over the door. It was to be that which they talked about when they ate, and that which they talked about down at night and probably had a little difficulty getting off to sleep. And this is the most amazing statement that so far we've considered that the

Lord has given.

He told them to write the Word of God everywhere, and it would be burnt into their hearts and lives. Now today we've forgotten about that. Oh, every now and then you see a verse of scripture stuck up, and unfortunately today it's written in a way that's difficult to read, and it's not presented in a dignified way.

Somebody comes down the street in an automobile, an old beat-up jalopy, and a verse of scripture written on it. You can hardly read the thing. I always feel humiliated when I see that, and then I look at the liquor advertisements.

My, how dignified they are given out. And I rode out Wilshire Boulevard with a friend and called his attention to the number of billboards that are liquor signs. That's all they are.

And I said, no wonder so many people in Southern California drink. This thing is burnt into their minds and hearts. Everywhere they turn, why, here it is, right there before them.

Drink this, drink that. And it all adds up to one thing. There is something wrong with you if you don't drink liquor.

That's what they're trying to tell you. They give you the impression that the intelligent are the ones who drink, and the oddballs do not. Now, when I was growing up as a boy, it was the opposite, that there's something wrong with the drunkard.

Today, he's just sick. He's not a sinner at all, and that he just needs a little revamping of a few of his axons and dendrites, and then he'll be in a position to drink in a normal sort of way. And after all, what is normal drinking? This is something that I think is very important to see.

Meditate on the Word of God. And there was the man that was formerly in my church down in Cleburne, Texas, and this man, he owned the Coca-Cola plant. He owned it there and in two other places in Texas.

And one day I was riding across the square in our little town, and I was going down to his place, and I went over to him, and I said to him, you know, I said, I counted 13 Coca-Cola signs on the square. I said, do you have to tell people 13 times on the square about Coca-Cola when everybody already knows about it? And then he said this to me. He said, when was the last time you saw a package of Arbuckle coffee? Well, I said, I don't recall of seeing a package of Arbuckle coffee since I was a boy.

He said, that's it. He said, years ago, Arbuckle coffee was advertised as much as Coca-Cola. And then the people who made the coffee thought, well, everybody knows about Arbuckle coffee, and they quit talking about it.

They quit advertising. They cut down on it. And he said, now, he says, nobody knows about Arbuckle coffee.

And he says, Coca-Cola feels like that a certain percentage, and you'd be amazed how much out of each bottle of Coca-Cola they sell, how much of that goes into advertising. Now, they feel like they've just got to keep saying it. And certainly, certain soap products feel like they have to keep saying it.

And certainly, cigarettes, they have to keep saying it with the silliest type of advertising. May I say to you, God says His Word ought to be given prominence. Now, if you and I are to understand the Word of God, we must meditate on the Bible.

I know a great many people. Family is, of course, divided during the day. The wife listens to the program at home.

The husband listens to it at work. And of the evening at the dinner table, they discuss what was covered that day in the Bible. May I say, that's meditation.

Go back over it again and again. But what do you think about when you don't have anything else to think about? Now, I find riding along in the car alone, and I make quite a few trips by myself, I find out that's a good time to take a passage of Scripture and to think about it, to give thought to it at that time. Someone asked a man once, says, When you can't sleep at night, do you count sheep? He said, No.

He says, I talk to the shepherd. Well, that's what God's people are asked to do. That is, God asks his people to meditate on his Word.

Now, what does it mean to meditate on the Word of God? Well, there's a very graphic statement that's made in the first Psalm. Let me read the first two verses. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Now, that word meditate, I'm told, is actually a picture of a cow chewing her cud. Now, you know, the old cow goes out of a morning, and while the grass is fresh with dew, she eats the grass. Then when the sun comes up and the grass is warm and the weather's hot, the old cow gets under a tree and lies down or stands there in the shade, and you see her chewing.

And you wonder, what in the world that cow is chewing? Well, they say that she's chewing her cud. Well, she's actually meditating, my friend. You see, we're also told that a cow has several stomachs.

So of a morning, she eats the grass rather hurriedly, stores it in one tummy, and then in the afternoon when it's hot, she meditates upon it. She chews the cud. She transfers it from one tummy to another, and she chews it over again.

May I say to you that we need to learn to do that in our thought processes in studying the Word of God. We need to take that which we've read and that which we've studied and meditate upon it. And that's one of the most valuable things that you can do.

Now, of course, as a preacher, I've had some advantage here over most of you. And I think here's where a preacher, a teacher of the Word has a tremendous advantage over other folk, is this, that in preparing a message, many times I'll take a verse of scripture and spend hours doing nothing in the world but just reading it over and over and reading what others have said and just keep reading it. And finally, it's a marvelous thing that I find that new truth will break out from that particular passage.

I remember hearing Dr. Harry Ironside years ago say that he had heard a lecturer in a seminar in Chicago, a lecturer on the Song of Solomon, and he gave quite a liberal interpretation, which put Solomon in a very bad light, by the way. And even the record that is clear makes Solomon bad enough, and we do not need to paint him any darker than he really is. But he was not satisfied.

And he said that he went and read the Song of Solomon again, got down on his knees and asked God to give him an understanding of it because he didn't have. And he did that again and again. In fact, he did it for weeks and months.

And finally, new light broke from that book. And I generally give his interpretation of the Song of Solomon for two reasons. It satisfies my mind and my heart more than any other interpretation that I've heard.

And then the second thing is, I know the man who did it spent a great deal of time in meditation. And meditation is really a lost art today. And again, may I say that we let it go at devotions.

And 30 minutes after devotions, a man writing to work and the housewife sweeping the kitchen or washing the dishes, I have a notion if you'd ask either one of them what it was they read at the breakfast table, they couldn't tell you. We need to learn to meditate on the Word of God, how important that is. That Ethiopian eunuch riding along, reading Isaiah.

He was actually studying Isaiah because he's in a passage with which he's having trouble. And he didn't know what it meant. He went over it and over it again.

And here comes along this man, Philip. And Philip, guided by the Spirit of God, it says he began at that scripture and he preached unto him Jesus. And just think of when he got to that particular passage of scripture that he was a sheep led to the slaughter.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned every one to his own way and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. I'd love to have been there that day and heard Philip, how we need to meditate on the Word of God.

And that is frankly where television is absolutely blotting out and changing the spiritual life of many families. There are great many boys and girls today that formerly in the home they would have known John 3.16 and they could have sung Jesus Loves Me, but now they can sing that silly TV commercial about a certain soap or about a certain something else. They know that and even the tune of it as well as the words, but they can't sing Jesus Loves Me.

May I say to you that one of the reasons today that our churches are becoming colder and colder and more indifferent to the Word of God is just simply because there is that lack of meditation upon the Word of God. And as we go through the this time again, learn to meditate upon it and I trust that you will continue to meditate on the Word of God. By the way, these folk who write in a long time after I've made a certain tape on a certain passage of scripture and they ask a certain question or some suggestion someone makes reveal that folk are meditating upon the Word of God.

Now I come to the fifth item about how to study the scriptures and this is read what others have written on the scripture. Now this is the fifth guideline for the study of the Word of God. Now I won't be able to get very far on this and we won't spend too much time developing this one, but it's very important and I recognize that it's rather a dangerous rule because a great many folk just depend on what someone else says about it.

And there are so many books that are out today that give wrong teaching concerning the Word of God and we need to test everything that's written by the Word of God, but this becomes a vicious circle because we also need what somebody else has to say to give us some light on a particular passage of scripture. May I say to you that a good commentary on every book of the Bible is very important and you'll notice in all the outlines that I have sent out and shall continue to send out, we have certain recommended books at the end of each book of the Bible. These are books that we can wholeheartedly recommend.

It doesn't exhaust the list of good books, but the only reason I put it in like this is to try to lead people to good books and steer them away from bad books because there are bad books. Now may I say again that we said there is a danger in reading certain literature. There are some that teaches false doctrine.

There are some that's quite liberal and you will not find these very profitable. I can assure you that is if you want to know what the Bible has to say. We feel that there are some very fine commentaries that have been written.

There are very fine books on different books of the Bible. We've already recommended Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, Living Messages of the Books of the Bible. We also would like to recommend our own book, Briefing the Bible, and we would be delighted, of course, to send it to you.

And we have put at the end of Briefing the Bible and the notes that we're sending out to you at the end of each book the books that we recommend. And if you'd like to follow them, I'm sure you'll find them helpful. Now every minister of the gospel, of course, has a set of books that he studies.

He needs those. Of course, someone says, should he give them verbatim? Should he present what somebody else has written verbatim? Well, my point is that he ought never to do that. But he has a perfect right to use what others have written.

He ought to give credit if he's going to quote a great deal from it. I've been told that sometimes some of my feeble messages are given by someone else, and sometimes credit is given, and sometimes no credit is given at all. As far as I'm personally concerned, it makes no difference.

But it does reveal the individual, his character, that will use someone else's material verbatim and not give credit for it. I had a professor in seminary that I felt solved this problem. And he said this when someone asked him, should you quote other writers? He said, you ought to graze on everybody's pasture, but give your own milk.

And that means that you are to read what others have said, but you put it in your own thought patterns and express it your way. And I think that we have a perfect right to do that, and I encourage anyone to do that. But understand the Bible for your own private reading.

It's well to read something that is good, something that is well worth while. And we encourage that, of course, that you read what others have written on the Bible and Scripture. Now we come to the sixth guideline for the understanding and the study of the Scripture.

Obey the Bible. Obedience is rather essential, by the way, and I personally think that it's all important. You will recall the incident in the life of Abraham that God called him to go to the land He would show him.

And God brought him into that land. And then a famine came, and this man Abraham, God had appeared to him in early Chaldees, then appeared to him when he got in the land. But Abraham ran off down to Egypt when the famine came.

God never told him to do that. He's certainly being disobedient. Somebody said, well, after all, he wants to be very sensible.

There's a famine, and everybody else was going to Egypt. Well, the point is, I think God would have kept Abraham there had he remained, but Abraham didn't. And as a result, why, when he was down in the land

of Egypt, God did not appear to him, and it was not until after he returned back into that land.

And why? Well, because of a lack of obedience. And that's very important to see, that obedience is essential to an understanding of the Bible. In other words, until that man Abraham obeyed what God had already revealed to him, God was not prepared to give to him any new truth.

But the minute that we obey, then God opens up new truth for us. And after all, even the gospel which is given to save our souls, the gospel is also given for the very definite purpose of obedience. I wonder if you've ever noticed that the greatest document that's ever been written on the gospel is the Epistle to the Romans.

And Paul put a parenthesis around it, or I almost think he put it in quotation marks, and he put around the gospel this matter of obedience. Will you listen? In the very first chapter, verse 5, Paul says, "...by whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name." Obedience to the faith. And that was where Adam and Eve went off.

You see, she not only listened to this enemy of God, the serpent, but she also disobeyed God. Obedience is very important to God. She disobeyed.

Now you'll find at the end of Romans that again Paul comes back to this, and next to the last verse of the Epistle, says, "...but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." That's the last thing Paul says in this Epistle, the obedience of faith. And what is between? Why, he sets before us the greatest document on what the gospel is, that great doctrinal section, that great practical section. And you find that the last part is duty, what we're to do.

And the important thing today is to recognize that God will not continue to reveal truth to you if you become disobedient. You see, sin will separate us from God and from the Bible. It is something that if we permit it in our lives, either the Bible will keep us from sin, or sin is going to keep us from the Bible.

You see, disobedience is something that is a very terrible thing, and we're to obey the Bible if we are to profit from its reading. And it's given to us, Paul says, this is given for the obedience of faith and how important that is. It is said that Hamilcar, the famous Carthaginian general of the Punic Wars, he once said to his own son, Hannibal, he said this, "...my son Hannibal will be a great general because of all my soldiers he best knows how to obey." Well, may I say to you, Hamilcar's statement certainly proved true because this man, Hannibal, is a great figure in the history of the world.

His army was composed of paid mercenaries of many nations, Africans, Spaniards, Gauls, and Italians, yet he retained their confidence during 16 years of hardship and privation in a foreign land, never having a single mutiny in the camp. What was his ability? Well, he was an extraordinary organizer. He trained these mixed bands into a most efficient whole.

And what was it that he did? He taught them to be obedient, obedient to the orders, obedient to the commands. And you remember that Lord Jesus says you'll know the doctrine if you keep it. You'll know of the doctrine.

And the Old Testament says taste of the Lord and see if he's good. Try this thing out. And that's the real test, by the way.

Many years ago there were four clergymen. They were discussing the merits of the various translations of the Bible. And one of the clergymen, he said he liked the King James Version best because of its simple, beautiful English.

And another expressed himself as liking the American Revised Version because it is more literal and comes nearer to the Hebrew and Greek text. And still another, the third one, he said he liked the Moffat Translation because it had an up-to-date vocabulary. And the fourth minister was silent.

And finally they asked him, they wanted to know his opinion. Well, he said, to tell the truth, I like my mother's translation best. She translated it into her life, and it was the most convincing translation I've ever seen.

And may I say to you that is exactly the thing that needs to be done today. Best argument for the Bible, in fact, it was Cowan who said the best way to defend the gospel is to live a life worthy of the gospel. That's the way that you prove that it is the Word of God.

How important that is. And the little jingle that goes, you are writing a gospel, a chapter each day by things that you do and words that you say. Men read what you write, whether faithful or true.

And by the way, what is the gospel according to you? That is true, by the way. That little jingle is very important. And someone else has written a little poem entitled Reading the Bible.

It's one thing to read the Bible through, another thing to read to learn and do. Some read it as their duty once a week, but no instruction from the Bible see. Some read to bring themselves into repute by showing others how they can dispute.

And then it goes on to say while others read because their neighbors do, to see how long it will take to read it through. Some read it for the wonders that are there, how David killed a lion and a bear, while others read it with uncommon care, hoping to find some contradiction there. And then I drop down there quite a few stanzas to this little poem.

And the final one says, but read it prayerfully and you will see although men contradict God's words, agree. For what the early Bible prophets wrote, we find that Christ and his apostles, quote, so trust no creed that trembles to recall what has been penned by one and verified by all. And you verified, of course, in your life.

And you will recall Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and this is in his second epistle to the Corinthians, the third chapter. He says this in verse 2, ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men. For as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

And such trust have we through Christ Godward, not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything is of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God. Oh, how important it is to see, friends, that the important thing is to obey the Word of God, obedience to the Word of God, to obey the Bible. I believe that today Christianity is being hurt more by those that are church members than by any other group.

That is one of the reasons today that you have all this rebellion on the outside, rebellion against the establishment, rebellion against the church, for it's the establishment. And so many preachers are trying to get on the bandwagon, and they're not doing very well by doing it, because they are not calling men and

women to God at all, but are trying to become popular again, because actually we find that this group have turned their backs on the Bible and on the church and the Word of God. Up at Berkeley, California, during a great deal of the protest marches up there, and I want to say that I'm not in sympathy with them, but there was one placard that was carried that interested me a great deal.

The placard had four words on it, church, no, Jesus, yes. May I say to you that I personally believe that the church has many, many faults. I recognize that.

And I know that a great many enemies can hide back of that today in criticizing the church. But very candidly, there's no question about it that the lives of a great many in the church are turning people away from the church today. There was a barrister in England years ago, was asked about why he didn't become a Christian, and he made this statement.

He said, I too might have become a Christian if I had not met so many who said they were Christians. How unfortunate that is. And we need to examine our own lives in that connection.

How well do you and I represent the cause of Christ today? The world we're told is not reading the Bible. I'm trying to get them to, by the way, and get them to the scripture, and get them to bypass some of us because we are not a very attractive advertisement. But regardless of that, we cannot escape.

There are people who measure Christianity by you and by me, and they look at us today. May I say it's important in this program to obey the Bible. Obey it.

How tremendous that is. And the scripture has a great deal to say about that. That great Bible reading that we referred to, led by Ezra, recorded by Nehemiah, and you will find out that the people wept when they heard the word, and they went out and attempted to obey the word of God.

How important it is to do that. Now, the last thing that I would like to pass on to you is the statement that's very important. It's the last guideline in the seventh.

Pass it on to others. And I'd like to pass this on to you, by the way. Not only read the Bible, not only study the Bible, not only meditate on the Bible, and not only read what others have written about it, and not only obey it, but pass it on to others.

And frankly, if we obey it, that's what we'll be doing. That's what we all should do. Now, you're going to reach a saturation point in the study of the Bible unless you pass it on to others.

That's something that you need to recognize. You know, God, for some reason, won't let you withdraw yourself from mankind in a monastery and become some sort of a walking Bible encyclopedia, knowing everything, and the rest of us remain ignorant. I think that's the reason that he made the statement that we are not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.

Don't forget to assemble yourself with others, and that's one of the reasons, I think, that God has blessed this program as he has. It's because of the fact that we're attempting to pass it on to others. A preacher wrote me, and he said, Dr. McGee, I'm using your program.

Do you mind if I use your outlines and your notes? Of course I don't mind. You can have anything this poor preacher's written, and if it would prove helpful to you, why, we'd certainly want you to have it. But that's

exactly what we want to do, is to pass it on to others, because I find that when we pass it on to others, that it becomes a blessing.

Now, I learned this lesson early in seminary. I pastored a little church, and there were about five other fellows in my class that did the same thing. They had a little church, and for two years I had that little church before I graduated.

And we five fellows, or six of us as the total was, we used to get together and talk things over, because as young pastors, just seminary students, not even dry back of the ears, and we were very green concerning many things, why we'd get together and talk over our mutual problems, our mutual situations, and what we could do. And in the course of the two years, we made a discovery that we were taking what we were learning in class, that which was given to us, and we were passing it on to others, that which we'd learned. And may I say this to you, that we found out that when we graduated, we actually were a year ahead of the other members of the class.

Why? Because we were smarter than the others? No. May I say we were not. I happened to be in a class in which there were several very bright young men, and we were not brighter than they were.

We had just had the experience of passing it on to others, and when we did, God was able to funnel in to us a great deal more than he might otherwise. This is important. And we have also rejoiced in the fact I've shared letters with you from time to time, and as we've said, these letters are always typical.

And these letters tell of folk who began listening to the program, got interested, opened up their home, and they are now conducting a Bible class. There are others that open their home, and they just use our tapes, and they use the tapes of others. And many of them have pastors that come in.

Many pastors have started classes, and all of them testify to the fact that it has increased their knowledge of the Word of God. That's what God wants us to do, pass it on. Don't forget, begin with prayer, read the Bible, study the Bible, meditate upon the Bible, read what others have written on the Bible, and pass the Bible on to others.

And in our guidelines that we're mailing out, I don't even mention at this time, I have a hand there in which you can learn the books of the Bible and put them on one hand. The chart is there. Be sure and write in for your copy today.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/17/SID17977.mp3>

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