

How to Read Scripture With Most Spiritual Profit

by Thomas Watson

To read Scripture with most spiritual profit, one must remove hindrances, prepare their heart, read with reverence, method, and seriousness, and apply the Word to their life.

Scripture: Psalm 119:73

Topics: "Bible Study", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

Thomas Watson emphasizes the importance of reading Scripture for spiritual profit by providing practical steps and attitudes to adopt. He highlights the need to remove hindrances, prepare hearts, read with reverence, method, seriousness, and humility, while also meditating, remembering, and applying the Word. Watson encourages believers to have a fervent love for the Scriptures, to compare themselves with the Word, and to seek personal application and obedience. He stresses the significance of Christ as the teacher, attending church services, and praying for God's guidance to profit from reading the Word.

Transcript

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1. Remove those things that will PREVENT you profiting:

(1) remove the love of every sin;

(2) take heed of the thorns which will choke the Word. These 'thorns' are those covetous cares that keep our minds on material matters when they should be concentrating on spiritual things;

(3) take heed of joking with, or making light of Scripture.

2. Prepare your HEARTS before the reading of the Word (1 Sam 7.3).

(1) Summon your thoughts to attend to this serious work;

(2) cleanse yourself of the unclean affections which take away the desire to read.

3. Read the Scriptures with REVERENCE. Think about every line you read. Realize that God is speaking to you!
4. Read the Bible with a METHOD, perhaps in order. Order and method are a help to memory.
5. Get a right UNDERSTANDING of Scripture (Ps 119.73). Compare texts with each other, talk to others, use other books and helps.
6. Read the Word with SERIOUSNESS. It is the savor of life to those who read it with seriousness, for it deals with everything that is most dear to us. Consider its subject matter--eternal life and death, heaven and hell, the labor of faith. Who can read these things and not be serious? Read, therefore, with a solemn and composed spirit.
7. Labor to REMEMBER what you read. Satan will try to steal the Word from our minds; we should guard it jealously. If we cannot remember what we read--our reading will be of no use to us.
8. MEDITATE upon what you read (Ps 119.15). This means to fix your thoughts upon what you are reading. Meditation without reading is foolish; reading without meditation is empty.
9. Come to read with HUMBLE hearts, acknowledging your unworthiness to have God reveal Himself to you in His Word. An arrogant man who feels he has nothing to learn, is unlikely to gain any profit.
10. BELIEVE that what you read is the very Word of God, that it is all divinely inspired (2 Tim 3.16). All the countless excellencies of Scripture testify that it is of God. Note the effect that the Bible has upon the hearts of men, now and throughout history. You will not obey something that you do not believe.
11. Highly PRIZE the Scriptures (Ps 119.72). Treasure it above all other books. It contains the things we must believe and do. It is the breeder and feeder of grace. A believer is born and fed by the Word of truth.
12. Get a fervent LOVE for the Word. Prizing refers to the judgment of a man, but love means also the affections. We should delight to be in the pages of God's Word; we must learn to delight in its comforts and in its reproofs and corrections.
13. Come to read the Word with HONEST hearts:
 - (1) read with hearts willing to know the whole counsel of God, and not willing to have any truth concealed. You cannot pick and choose Scriptures;
 - (2) read in order that you might be made better. The Word is the means of our sanctification. Go to God's Word to find the truths that will make you more like Christ.
14. Learn to APPLY Scripture; take every word as if it were spoken personally to yourselves. When the Word talks of the punishment of sin, it means my sin; when it tells me of duty, it means my duty.
15. Observe the COMMANDS of the Word, as well as its promises. Use the commands to direct you, and the promises to comfort you. Do not look more to comfort than to duty, or you might find your comforts false.
16. Let your thoughts dwell most upon the most USEFUL parts of Scripture. Although all parts are excellent, some are more emphatic or vital than others. Spend more time reading of faith and the new man

in Christ--than in the genealogies of dead kings!

17. COMPARE yourselves with the Word; see how Scripture and your hearts agree. Is your heart a mirror of the Word? Is the Word written upon your heart? By comparing ourselves with the Word, we get to know the true state of our souls, and see what evidences we have for heaven.

18. Take special notice of those Scriptures that speak to your particular CASE. Pay careful attention to those paragraphs of Scripture that are most appropriate to your particular situation, such as affliction, desertion, and sin. In reading, read all the Bible, but mark those verses which apply most to your own self.

19. Take special notice of the EXAMPLES in Scripture, and make the examples living sermons to yourself.

(1) Observe the examples of God's judgment upon sinners: they are warnings, lamps to keep us from the rocks;

(2) observe the examples of God's mercy to saints: they are props to our faith and spurs to holiness.

20. Do not stop reading the Bible until you find your heart WARMED. Read the Word not only as a history, but strive to be heartily affected by it.

21. Determine to PRACTICE whatever you read. "Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart." Psalms 119:34. Christians should be walking Bibles, living the truths written. The Word is not only a guide to knowledge, but a guide to obedience. A holy reading of God's Word results in our fleeing from sins and practicing the duties commanded.

22. Make right use of CHRIST in His prophetic office. It is one thing to read a promise, another really to know it to be true. If we would read with profit, we must have Christ as our teacher: when Christ taught, He opened not only men's eyes, but their understandings (Lk 24.45).

23. Be at all the appointed SERVICES of the church, and spend much time in hearing the Word preached. Be diligent in attending upon a Biblical, faithful ministry. Ministers are God's interpreters; it is their work to open up and expound dark places of Scripture.

24. PRAY that God would make you profit (Is 48.17). It is when God's Spirit joins Himself to the Word that it takes effect in our hearts and minds.

In CONCLUSION:

(1) Do not be content with simply reading the Scriptures, but labor to find some spiritual benefit and profit. Get the Word inscribed upon your heart.

(2) If you do profit from your reading, be sure to adore the grace of God. Bless God that He has not only given you His Word, but some ability to understand it.

If you struggle to profit from your reading, then take note of the following encouragements:

(1) You can profit from reading the Scriptures even if you do not attain to the level of others. Do not judge yourself according to the standard of others. The Lord called it all good ground--whether it brought forth thirty, sixty or a hundred-fold (Mt 13.8); so you may not get as much profit as others, but the profit you do get is still most worthwhile.

(2) You can still profit from reading the Word, even if you are slow to understand. You may even have a weak mind--but strong affections. A weak understanding can keep you from sin, as weak sight can keep a man from falling into deep water. If you have some vision, you cannot be all blind.

(3) You can profit from reading the Scriptures although you may not have an excellent memory. You can have a good heart, without having a good memory. Also, even if you don't remember all that you read, you can remember the most important part. The lamp burns even when it is not full of oil; our hearts can burn with love when our memories are not full of Scripture.

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