

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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LET'S READ OUR BIBLES!

By Andrew Dow

In 2014 the *American Bible Society* teamed up with *Barna Group* to conduct a study entitled “The State of the Bible.” They concluded that 88% of U.S. adults own a Bible, while 54% admitted to reading the Bible less than five times a year outside of their regular weekend worship service. The Bible is easily the most distributed book of all time, and yet very few people are reading it. Despite God’s expectation that His followers give careful attention to His words (Josh 1:8; 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 2:15), we consistently fail to feast upon them. Let’s think a little bit about why this is the case and what we can do to fix the problem on an individual level.

Why Don't We Read The Bible?

“I don’t have enough time to read the Bible.” Time is so valuable that Paul wrote, **“Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil”** (Eph 5:15-16). Consider these questions: How much time do you spend on Facebook or other social media sites? How much time do you spend watching TV or movies? How much time do you spend reading for leisure? How much time do you spend on your hobbies? With all the time we spend on frivolous things, surely we can make time for a book that impacts our eternity!

“I wouldn’t be able to understand the Bible.” It is amazing to me that some who have never read the Bible from cover to cover are so quick to dismiss it as incomprehensible. No one can fully understand any book from which they have only read a handful of sentences. Consider this: **“God is not a God of confusion but of peace”** (1 Cor 14:33). Paul wrote elsewhere, **“All Scripture is... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work”** (2 Tim 3:16-17). God’s words are not meant to confuse us; they are for our understanding and application.

“I don’t really want to read the Bible.” Few Christians would probably say this, but I wonder if this attitude is what really keeps us from Bible reading. It’s not that we don’t want to know God’s Word, but that we don’t care enough to make the effort. Perhaps we think it won’t do us that much good. Whatever our excuse, we need to set it aside and recognize our need for Bible reading.

Why Should We Read The Bible?

The Bible provides guidance. God’s word says, **“A man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps”** (Jer 10:23). The word of God provides that direction. **“Your word is a lamp to my feet,”** the Psalmist declares, **“and a light to my path... The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I have not gone astray from Your precepts”** (Psa 119:105, 110). It contains the only words that can guide a man to God.

The Bible provides life. Paul reminded Timothy, **“From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation...”** (2 Tim 3:15). The epistle to the Romans says,

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17). True faith is the result of hearing what the Bible reveals to us. Apart from such faith, there can be no life (Heb 11:6; Eph 2).

The Bible is God’s mind revealed. Notice these words about the Bible, **“For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.... Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God”** (1 Cor 2:10-12). The Bible is not simply a historical record, or a good piece of literature. The Bible is God’s mind given to us so that we can know Him! Why should we make a point to read the Bible? It is our source of guidance, it is our source of life, and it is the only means by which we can come to know the mind of the Lord!

Some Tips for Bible Reading

For those who understand the Bible’s value and would like to make Bible reading a habit, I’d like to close by offering a few suggestions.

First, make a plan. Without a game plan, it’s easy to become more lax until one stops altogether. I would encourage anyone who wants to read through the Bible to find a good Bible reading schedule. These are easily accessible on the internet and can be extremely helpful. If anyone has any interest in such a plan, I’d be happy to share with you some that I have found useful.

Second, find a friend. Whether it’s a spouse, friend, or church member, a reading partner will prove invaluable. Find someone who will read with you, discuss what you read, and keep you on track. This will not only help you in your effort to read God’s word, but it may be just the

encouragement your friend needs to read God’s word too.

Finally, just read. The best advice I’ve ever received about Bible reading is to just read the text. It’s easy to get bogged down by asking questions and running to find the answers. Rather than letting questions derail you, quickly jot down notes or questions to go back and study later. In the meantime, just read the text like you would any other book. You may be surprised how many of your questions are answered when you simply read the text.

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth... so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it” (Isa 55:10-11).

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON: Unity Despite Diversity

PM LESSON: The New Testament Canon

**“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)**