

GRACIOUS MEANS: BIBLE READING

- SUBJECT:** If I read my Bible every day, what should I expect to happen? How does God use it to change me?
- COMPLEMENT:** When I read my Bible every day, the Spirit moves to change me to know God and myself, grow in wisdom, love, and wariness, become more useful to those around me - in short, I change.
- IDEA:** **You cannot love someone you do not know.**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. It is foolish not to read your Bible!

- 1. A fool is someone who rejects/ deflects wisdom** (truth beyond what the person already "knows/ experienced"). By contrast, a wise person wants to be helped to grow.
Proverbs 12:15 (ESV¹) - ¹⁵The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.
- 2. Does the shoe fit?** Dane Ortund (*What is a Fool and How do You Deal with One?*) gives 10 illustrations of what rejection of information outside one's self looks like:
 - (1) Doesn't ask questions.
 - (2) Doesn't listen well.
 - (3) Can't say "I don't know."
 - (4) Concludes based on partial information.
 - (5) Cannot consider a rebuke.
 - (6) Has to win.
 - (7) Answers questions quickly and dogmatically.
 - (8) Words are depleting, not nourishing.
 - (9) Makes decisions alone; already knows what to do.
 - (10) Only learns through painful firsthand experience and is constitutionally unable to learn from the secondhand experience of others.
- 3. As sinners, this could describe any of us!** This lesson focuses on the single most important means of receiving information outside ourselves: **Read your Bible!**

B. Does the Bible itself say you should read it? Yes! In fact, Bible reading is imperative if you want to love the Lord.

- 1. Deuteronomy 6:4-9** - ⁴"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵**You shall love the LORD** your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And **these words that I command** you today **shall be on your heart**. ⁷**You shall teach them** diligently to your children, and **shall talk of them** when you

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

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sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. **⁸You shall bind them** as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. **⁹You shall write them** on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

2. **Psalm 119:97–104** - (Note: Terms like "law," "commandment," "testimonies," "precepts," "rules," "words," etc. imply much more than the 613 commandments in the Old Testament. They reflect revelation from a personal God who loves his people, directing them for their good.)

⁹⁷Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.

⁹⁸Your commandment **makes me wiser** than my enemies, for it is ever with me.

⁹⁹**I have more understanding** than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.

¹⁰⁰**I understand** more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

¹⁰¹**I hold back my feet from** every evil way, in order to keep your word.

¹⁰²**I do not turn aside** from your rules, for you have taught me.

¹⁰³How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

¹⁰⁴**Through your precepts I get understanding;** therefore I **hate every false way.**

How can New Testament believers have this same affection - those of us who are not under law, but under grace?

3. **Joshua 1:8** - ⁸This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then **you will make your way prosperous,** and then you will **have good success.**

In this church age, what might that prosperity look like for us?

4. **Psalm 19:7–11**- ⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, **reviving the soul;** the testimony of the LORD is sure, **making wise the simple;** ⁸the precepts of the LORD are right, **rejoicing the heart;** the commandment of the LORD is pure, **enlightening the eyes;** ⁹the fear of the LORD is clean, **enduring forever;** the rules of the LORD are true, and **righteous altogether.** ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹Moreover, **by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.**

What reward do you expect from reading (and doing) your Bible?

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II. IF I READ MY BIBLE EVERY DAY, WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT TO HAPPEN? HOW DOES GOD USE IT TO CHANGE ME?

A. What I mean by "Bible reading."

I am talking about "devotional Bible reading." The emphasis here is on "what I (Bob Hartman) mean." Others may define it differently. That's OK.

1. What devotional Bible reading is not (generally).

- a. Bible reading that centers around a devotional book. (Ex: *Simple Prayers*)
- b. Intense inductive Bible study.
- c. Preparation for a group Bible study or to teach or share with someone else.

2. What devotional Bible reading is: Opening your Bible and reading it.

- a. Usually on a schedule (certain time of the day, certain days of the week).
- b. Reading the Bible in a "normal way," starting at Genesis and ending at Revelation - modifications OK!
- c. It is more devotional (daily "washing") than goal oriented.

Ephesians 5:25–27 - ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, **having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,** ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

B. I like what Matt Smethurst (Before You Open Your Bible) says about the way we approach the Word. He lists nine attitudes which enhance our time in the Bible.

Here are three:

1. Approach your Bible desperately. You are convinced that you surely shall be a fool by depriving yourself of God's heavenly perspective on life.

- Proverbs 2:1–5 - ¹My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, ²making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; ³yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, ⁴if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, **⁵then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.**
- **1 Peter 2:1-3** - ¹So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. **²Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—** ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Truthfully, on a scale of 1-10, how desperate are you for the Word?

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2. Approach your Bible prayerfully. Psalm 119:18 says it well:

Psalm 119:17–18 - ¹⁷Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. ¹⁸**Open my eyes**, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

3. Approach your Bible joyfully.

- Jeremiah 15:16 - ¹⁶Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me **a joy and the delight of my heart**, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.
- Psalm 34:4–8 - ⁴I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. ⁵**Those who look to him are radiant**, and their faces shall never be ashamed. ⁶This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. ⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. ⁸Oh, **taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed** is the man who takes refuge in him!
- Luke 10:38–42 - ³⁸Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹And she had a sister called Mary, who **sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching**. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴²but one thing is necessary. **Mary has chosen the good portion**, which will not be taken away from her."

BUT, if we are honest, we must confess that we have different attitudes toward reading our Bible. What negative attitudes might we have, and why do you think we have them?

C. Back to the original question: *If I read my Bible every day, what should I expect to happen? How does God use it to change me?*

1. I learn that this world is not about me. It is about God, who he is and what he is really like. I discover things ...

a. About God.

Exodus 33:18–20; 34:5-8 - ¹⁸Moses said, "Please show me your glory." ¹⁹And he [the LORD] said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. ²⁰But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." ... ^{34:5}The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "**The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger,**

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and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." ⁸And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.

Can't you get know this God apart from his Word? Explain why or why not.

b. About myself.

- I am of the most glorious creatures ever made. (Psalm 139; Psalm 8)
- I am of the most hideous defacements ever done. (Genesis 3; Romans 3:1-20)
- I am loved beyond comprehension. (*You supply the reference!*)
- I begin to know why I am here.

Micah 6:6–8 - ⁶"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" ⁸He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

2. My eyes are opened to the cosmic battle raging around me, and I see that it is raging in me.

Around me:

- Ephesians 6:12 - ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

In me:

- Romans 7:21–24 - ²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

3. I become more aware of my need for truth external to myself. (Proverbs 12:15)

4. I learn love. More than to love. More than about love. I come to know Love personally, and his name is Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 1:14–15 - (Apostle Paul speaking) ¹⁴ ... the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵The saying is

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trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

5. **Over time, I start to "get" the Bible. Even better, it "gets" me. *Meaning what?***

D. Barriers to overcome: There is not a person in this room who does not find this hard. If you didn't, you wouldn't be here.

1. This includes me. *What about you? What things typically stand in the way?*
2. Reading the Bible is spiritual warfare. You have to "run to the battle" like David did. Get in the Word and stay there.
3. **No Rules!**
 - It is not a competition.
 - Plan to be a Christian and do these kinds of things the rest of your life.
 - Doing something is better than doing nothing.
 - Listening to the Bible counts. If you are an Audible user, you can get the whole thing for 1 credit (about \$15). A readable translation (ESV or NIV84) is recommended.
 - If you want to use a prepared plan, do it.
 - Or a chronological plan. Do it.
 - Just do it.

III. CONCLUSION

Q & A