

Give Attention To Reading

Joe Slater

Each Sunday morning we have a Scripture reading before Communion and another before the sermon. Why? These are not mere formality or ritual. God's word deserves our reverent, undivided attention!

Paul exhorted Timothy to *"give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine"* (1 Timothy 4:13). Just as exhortation and doctrine (teaching) are public, so this reference is to the public reading of Scripture.

Please follow along in your Bible as the Scriptures are read. You will increase your comprehension and retain more. Remember, the Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). When the Scriptures are read, it is just as though Jesus Himself were standing there speaking directly to you. Wouldn't you pay attention if He were?

Let us imitate Israel's good attitude back in Ezra's time. As he was publicly reading the Scriptures, *"the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the Law"* (Nehemiah 8:3). To show their respect, when Ezra opened the book, *"all the people stood up"* (8:5). By the way, this wasn't just a couple of verses being read; Ezra started early in the morning and read until noon! (8:3).

John the apostle pronounced a blessing upon those who read the Scriptures publicly: *"Blessed is he who reads, and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it"* (Revelation 1:3a). Note that *"he who reads"* is singular, while *"those who hear"* and those who *"keep those things"* are plural. John was writing about the public reading of God's word, particularly the book of Revelation (though the application extends to all of the Bible).

Publicly reading the Bible is both a profound privilege and a solemn duty. The same goes for hearing and keeping (doing) what is written. In all that we do, let us strive to honor God!

A Hand Or A Handout?

Steve Adjei-Laryea of Ghana posted this on LinkedIn: "I've seen a guy who sells books at Community Five in Tema. He's there often. One day the title of one of his books caught my attention; *'How to become a Millionaire.'* Let me leave that here, for now, at least.

"I know a guy who has attended every 'And your life will never be the same' conference. His life is still the same.

"After one of my posts, a gentleman reached out to me about how I've inspired him. I was happy. He asked me how he could also get to work in the industry I work in. I told him to check my posts again because everything I'd say was already in the posts. He came again; 'can you send me names of the top 5 mining companies in Ghana?' My answer to him was simple; 'Bro, if you seriously want to be in this industry then you must research this one. Let me know what you find.' He never came back.

"Lesson? You can attend every crusade, prayer session and get inspired to a burst-point. If you don't have the passion to do things for yourself, to fish and not to be given fish, if the only help you recognize are dish outs, freebies, and being spoon fed, then like the guy at the Community Five traffic light, 'a how to' book in your hands means nothing."

Let's face it, some folks do not really want a hand, they want a handout. Some do not want to learn to fish, they want to be given fish -- every day.

The tough thing is to recognize such symptoms in ourselves. Are we learning to be teachers (Heb 5:12) or are we perpetual students -- always listening to sermons and Bible classes but never coming to a knowledge of the truth (2 Tim 3:7)? Are we sharing what we learn with others?

According to the scriptures, the task of church leaders is not to do the work for ordinary Christians, but to equip every Christian to participate in the work (Eph 4:11-16). Let us each ask ourselves, "What is my current level of participation? When will it improve?"

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)

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". . . not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:12).

How do you say "I love you" in a subtle way? A wink of the eye; a revealing smile; a special look. People have their own little nuances that tell someone across the room or the miles that they are loved.

Mr. Rogers had a very public persona. He did not know a stranger. Mr. Rogers made people feel that they were worthwhile.

He was fond of the numbers 1, 4, and 3. They stood for "I love you." "I" only takes one letter; "love" takes 4 letters; "you" takes 3 letters. Mr. Rogers stepped on the scales one day and saw that he weighed 143 lbs. He weighed 143 lbs. for the next 30+ years.

Tom Hanks said that playing Mr. Rogers was terrifying. How do you imitate a person like Mr. Rogers?

Who would you like to imitate? There have been many a person who have passed through this life that are worthy of imitating. I am confident that many Bible characters would be selected as to whom would be a good example to follow.

It goes without saying that Jesus Christ would be the choice of Christians. We are encouraged to be transformed into the image of Jesus (Romans 12:2). That would necessitate knowing Christ, not simply knowing who Christ is, but knowing Christ.

I know **of** Mr. Rogers, but I **know** Jesus Christ. It would be helpful to follow the example of Mr. Rogers. But it is eternally better to love and follow Jesus.

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--Dennis Russell (Santa Maria, CA)