

Bible Reading and Bible Study

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Let me be the last to discourage regular, consistent reading of the Bible! It will bless anyone and everyone who practices it. The milk and meat of God's word nourishes the soul as nothing else can. Reading will help you to store up God's word in your heart so that you may not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11).

That being said, there is a difference between Bible reading and Bible study. Study involves digging deeper into the text to understand more fully what the inspired writer is saying.

Luke 4:33a provides a great example of the need for study. *"Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon."* Most people today understand what a demon is: an evil spirit. A surface reading of that sentence would tell us that an unfortunate man was afflicted by a demon. Subsequent verses show the power of Jesus in casting out that demon. But we might wonder why the Scripture says, "spirit of an unclean demon." Isn't it a given that a demon is unclean?

Study shows us that Luke, a Gentile, was writing to Theophilus (Luke 1:3). Theophilus is a Greek name meaning "God-lover." In that verse Luke calls him "most excellent Theophilus," indicating he could well be a government official of some kind. Whatever the case, his Greek name would indicate he grew up in a pagan home.

Pagans viewed demons as spirits that could be either good or bad. Thus, Luke took great pains to make certain that Theophilus understood that this was an evil spirit that Jesus cast out. What might seem obvious to you or me wouldn't necessarily be that plain to Theophilus.

Read your Bible! Do so regularly and consistently. But be sure to study it too.

Lending a Hand

Residents in a Californian neighborhood had been raising loud protests over a dangerous bone-rattling pothole. The giant menace shook and shuddered cars and bicycles alike. Then, on the morning of April 11, 2023, an unusual and hopeful sign of progress appeared. But there were no barricades. No city workers or trucks. No men or women holding slow/stop flags. Just two men, shovels, and a bag of cement. What made this incident particularly newsworthy was the identity of one of the workers: former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (Associated Press, 4/12/2023).

Sometimes, for progress to occur, we have to roll up our sleeves and get to work. This is not a new idea. In fact, it is one of the biblical principles necessary for a healthy, growing local church. Writing to Ephesus, the Apostle Paul observed: *"from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love"* (Ephesians 4:16). The key to church growth is not to be found in gimmicks or compromising the truth by teaching only the things that people want to hear. The key is in each member being willing to lend a hand, or as Paul put it: *"every part (i.e. member) does its share."* With this in mind, I ought to be prayerfully considering what I can do to help His church grow.

--David Bragg (via *Bulletin Gold*)

Our harassed world seeks refuge in video games, movies, TV, religious fads, and drugs. What people really need is old-fashioned Biblical conviction that keeps them awake at night and makes them miserable until they repent and turn to God in obedient faith.

--Vance Havner (greatly adapted)

The Lord's Day

So manifold are the blessings God has poured out upon contemporary America that the average man has not merely one day, but two, out of every week in which he may seek Almighty God in worship. A tragic paradox is that the very abundance of contemporary blessings has become the occasion for increasing neglect of the day of worship.

What an oddity that man, finding himself with two or three days on his hands, promptly decides to make them all for pleasure and leave God out of his life altogether! The neglect of the day of worship is a basic wrong that shall cry to God until it is righted, or until the spiritual basis of society is removed altogether and man finds himself once more strapped to his plow or his machine, as presently is the case in godless slave states.

One sometimes hears the cry, "Sunday is the only day I have!" On the contrary, it is the only day one does not have; it is the Lord's Day. Christ claimed the first day of the week through His resurrection on that day and the earliest Christians gave it to Him by fidelity of their pre-dawn devotions in the darkness of those ancient assemblies.

Their faithfulness won the day for all succeeding generations, a day primarily for rest and worship. God forbid that Sunday should be lightly thrown away by a godless, secular society which dares to seize it for lust or pleasure, forgetting its origin, and making its ultimate loss a certainty.

--Burton Coffman (deceased)

MATURITY

You aren't mature until you know how to communicate, apologize, be truthful, be accountable, and accept responsibility without blaming someone else.