



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Get Ready! Read the Bible Regularly & Systematically

10 Questions to ask at a Christmas Gathering

1. *What's the best thing that's happened to you since last Christmas?*
2. *What was your best Christmas ever? Why?*
3. *What's the most meaningful Christmas gift you've ever received?*
4. *What was the most appreciated Christmas gift you've ever given?*
5. *What was your favorite Christmas tradition as a child?*
6. *What is your favorite Christmas tradition now?*
7. *What do you do to try to keep Christ in Christmas?*
8. *Why do you think people started celebrating the birth of Jesus?*
9. *Do you think the birth of Jesus deserves such a nearly worldwide celebration?*
10. *Why do you think Jesus came to earth?*



Imagine picking up a history of the United States and starting with the chapter on the Great Depression. Finishing that, then suppose you turn to read of the War of 1812, and then of putting Neil Armstrong on the moon. Or picture yourself taking the biography of George Washington off the shelf and reading first of his marriage to Martha, then a chapter on his final years, and then the one on the general's initial military campaign.

Not a good way to understand either history or someone's life,

is it?

But that's how some people read the Bible. A chapter of Genesis today, one from Romans tomorrow, a couple of psalms the next day—such a haphazard approach is not the way to understand the message of Scripture.

To read the Bible purposefully requires a plan. The plan can be as simple as starting in Genesis and reading a certain number of chapters each day straight through to Revelation, or as involved as reading in

multiple books at a sitting.

The plan I propose we do corporately is to read 2 chapters a day from the OT; read one chapter each weekday from both a poetry book and a NT book. This means that on Saturday and Sunday you will only read from the OT.

In fact, it has been easy for me to read my OT in the morning, my poetry at noon and my NT at night.

Whatever you do, be sure to read regularly and systematically!

Read & Meditate

Have you ever read a few chapters in your Bible, closed it, and then realized, "I don't remember a thing I've read"? When this happens, don't blame your age, IQ, or education, for they're not the cause. Nearly all Bible readers frequently experience this forgetfulness. In most cases, however, the problem has more to do with the *method* of engaging God's Word than anything else. For if you merely read the Bible, don't be surprised if you forget most—if not all—of what you've read.

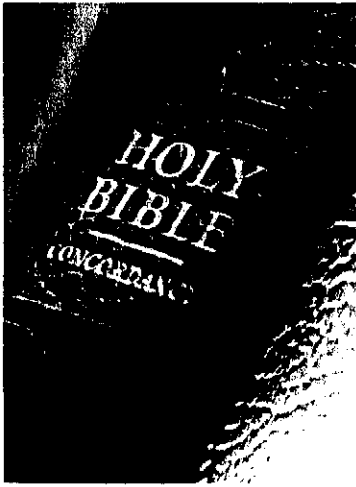
What's the simple solution? (And I do believe that benefiting from the intake of God's Word *must* be fundamentally simple since the Lord expects it of all His people, regardless of age, IQ, or education.) The solution is not only to

read the Scriptures, but to *meditate* on them. Reading, of course, is the starting place. *Reading* is the *exposure* to Scripture, but *meditation* is the *absorption* of Scripture. And it's the absorption of Scripture that leads to the transformation of our lives.

The Bible itself explicitly warns that if we do not look intently at (that is, meditate on) God's perfect Word, we'll forget it: "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25, NASB). Just as *hearing* the Word of God without meditating on it causes a person to be a "forgetful hearer," so anyone who *reads* the Bible

Read & Meditate

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without meditating on it becomes a forgetful reader. And if you can't remember what you read, you probably won't experience or be changed by what you read.

On most days though, you probably feel as though you're not able to give nearly enough time to the Word of God, much less introduce something else to the process. So, assuming that you're already devoting time on a regular basis to reading the Bible (and if you're not, *that's* the place to start), let me suggest a way whereby you can begin to meditate on Scripture without necessarily increasing the overall time involved.

If, for example, you normally spend ten minutes in Bible reading, from now

on, don't spend your entire time reading. Starting tomorrow, read for five minutes and meditate for five minutes. It's far better to *read less*, but *remember more*, than to read for the entire ten minutes and remember nothing. It's far better to close your Bible knowing that you have something from God's Word with you so that you can "meditate in it day and night" (Joshua 1:8), than to realize that you've already forgotten everything you've read.

Get Ready!

Meditate on Scripture & Life

The Bible directs us to four objects of meditation:

1. Mediate on God's *Word*. For instance, the "blessed" man in Psalm 2 meditates day and night on God's Law.
2. Mediate on God's *creation*. This what David means in Psalm 143:5 when he says, "I meditate on all your works."
3. Meditate on God's *providence*. We see this in such texts as Psalm 77:12, "I will mediate on ...all your deeds."
4. Mediate on God's *character*. In Psalm 63:6 David says, "I will meditate on You in the night watches."

These four could, however, be condensed to two categories for meditation: mediate on the content of Scripture and meditate on the perspective of Scripture. In other words, our thoughts can focus on the words of the Bible or on any particular subject and how the Bible speaks to that subject. That is to say, we can mediate on Scripture and we can mediate on Life.

There are two directions for meditation. One starts with Scripture and seeks to apply it to life, the other starts with life and takes it to the light of Scripture.

