

HOW TO READ BIBLE

I. What is Bible?

(A) Bible is the words of God

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;" 2 Timothy 3:16

"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is [a matter] of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." 2 Peter 1:20-21

"The words of the LORD are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times." Psalms 12:6

The entire Bible is inspired by God. It is words spoken by God to men. Sometimes God speaks to men directly, and sometimes He puts thoughts in men's mind and moves their hearts to understand what He wants to say.

There are 66 books in the entire Bible. The time length involved from writing the first book to the last book was about 1,600 years. The number of writers used by God exceeds 40. Those writers had very different background and training. Some were kings; some were shepherds; some were fishermen; some were doctors; some were scholars; and some were uneducated people. Although the completion of Bible took a long time, and each writer had various upbringing and discipline, the entire Bible had one consistent focus. Every book connects well to the other and aggregately proclaims a very complete message. All the characters and events in it are consistently and harmoniously linked. It is virtually impossible to find any book in this world written in such a way. It is possible for Bible because it is the words of God.

(B) Bible is the covenant between God and men

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.'" Exodus 34:27

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." Hebrews 8:10

Bible also functions as the covenant between God and men. Bible has two parts: Old Testament and New Testament. In the Old Testament, we observe that God was a God of covenants. He made covenant with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses, with Joshua and with David. Every covenant was based on as well as expands the prior one.

All covenants reveal God's glorious plan and promise to men as well as men's obligation to God.

Although men failed and defaulted on the covenants with God, God's plan never fails. Therefore, when the hour is full, He sent his only begotten son Jesus to become the mediator of a better and new covenant with His people. This new covenant is based on a even better promise. Now this covenant is being installed in us believers' hearts. Through that new covenant, He is our God and we have been made His people forever. What a wonderful and gracious covenant that is! Bible is a precious book concerning all our blessings today and hope in the future. We should be thankful for and cherish this great book.

II. The Importance of Reading the Bible

(A) Reading the Bible enables us to obtain the bread of life

"Thy words were found and I ate them, And Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts."
Jeremiah 15:16

" But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" "
Matthew 4:4

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." John 6:63

In addition to a fleshly life, every believer of Christ has a spiritual life. Just as our flesh feels hungry, so will our spiritual life sense hunger. What is the bread for our spiritual life? Prophet Jeremiah said: "Thy words were found and I ate them". Therefore, God's word is our spiritual food. In Matthew Chapter 4, when facing devil's temptation, Jesus resisted it by quoting words in the Bible: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." The "word" mentioned here refers to the word God speaks to us today. Men can not live right, neither can their spiritual life grow well, if they are lack of the word of God in their daily life.

Bible is the spiritual milk for new believers and the solid food for our growth. We can live without all the other things, but we can never live without God's word. We have to live on it and grow gradually to the full measurement of Christ.

(B) Bible reading brings forth light and guidance on our path

"Thy word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path." Psalms 119:105

"Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee."

Psalms 119:11

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Hebrews 4:12

Our natural life is dark, and we live in a world of darkness. Therefore, we desperately need His enlightening and guidance. God is light, and His word is light. Bible says: "His word is the lamp of my feet and light on my path." His word lights up our pathway and enables us to find our direction and walk in peace.

Bible is the most reliable guidance in our daily living. We must read Bible in order to keep His words in our hearts. The hidden words become our protection so that we will not sin against Him. God's words are also full of life and power. His words are sharper than any double-edged sword, and nothing can hide from Him. Every time when He speaks, our natural life is enlightened and torn down, but at the same time He rebuilds us.

III. How to Read Bible

(A) Be a person that longs for God's word and willing to obey

"like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" 1 Peter 2:2

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night."
Psalms 1:2

"If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or [whether] I speak from Myself." John 7:17

In order to read well God's words, we must first to have desire for His words. As a normal Christian, one must long for His words as a baby longs for milk. Acts 17 praised Bereans that "they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily". Just as we need to eat daily to provide nutrition for our body, we need to read His word daily to provide spiritual nutrition. We can not eat one day and stop for three days, neither should we read lots of Bible in one day and stopped for many days. Just as the poet said in Psalms 119: "I rise before the dawning of the morning, And cry for help; I hope in Your word. My eyes are awake through the night watches, That I may meditate on Your word." Every morning we should receive words from God and meditate on them day and night.

Also, we must have a determination to obey His word, for God does not reveal His teaching to those who have no desire to obey them. Only those who have determined to obey God's word will understand.

(B) First general then detail

Bible reading has to be done in a sequential manner instead of randomly. First, read the entire Bible a few times in order to have a general overall knowledge of the Bible. Then study it in details. This reading manner is just like looking up in a city map. We always find the mains streets, then smaller roads or alleys. Therefore, when we read Bible, we should find major facts and then look in depth for details. This is an easier way of understanding the Bible.

(C) First open then understand

"Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures," Luke 24:45

"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." Ephesians 1:17

The thing that distracts us the most is our habit of trying to understand Bible with the analysis our own mind. Bible is a book that needs revelation. Therefore, we need to set aside our own logic and curiosity, and ask the Lord to give us the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. When He opens our understanding, we will be able to understand His words.

(D) The principles of Bible reading

1. Find facts - If we read it factually, we are already half successful.
2. Gain life - The word of the Lord is life and spirit.
3. Know the truth - Know Christ and His deeds as well as principles
4. Find a way - Find practical ways to carry out what we read in the Bible.