

What Are You Doing With Your Bible?

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Don't just own it - read it! The Bible is the most popular book in the world, and it is owned by millions of people. As a matter of fact, many people own two or more copies of the Bible. We should be extremely thankful that we have the privilege of owning personal copies of the Scriptures, knowing that many generations of the past were not so blessed. However, one may wonder how many people are actually reading their Bibles on a regular basis. Many people seem completely satisfied to merely have a Bible sitting on the coffee table, or sitting by their bed. The truth is that merely owning a Bible and having it collecting dust on a shelf will avail us nothing. We must read the Bible before we can really gain benefits from it! Often when Jesus was teaching, He would ask the question, "*Have ye not read?*" As a matter of fact, Matthew records Jesus asking this question at least six times (Matthew 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31). By asking this question, Jesus implies that we would know about spiritual matters if we would read the Word of God. Paul told Timothy, "*Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine*" (1 Timothy 4:13). Paul knew that it was important for Timothy to keep reading the Word of God. After all, the Word of God is the source of our faith! (Romans 10:17). So let us not merely own a Bible - let us also read it!

Don't just read it - study it! Thankfully there are many in the world who go beyond the act of merely owning a Bible - they actually read their Bibles. However, those of us who read our Bibles may sometimes find ourselves just "going through the motions" while we are reading. When we finish reading, we may not remember one thing about the text we just read! There are many reasons why we may just go through the motions when reading: 1) Knowing that we are supposed to read our Bibles, we may just be reading to ease our consciences; 2) We may be using a Bible reading schedule that says we are supposed to read a certain amount of text per day, and we are rushing to get it done; 3) We may be too tired to really concentrate on what we are doing. There may be other reasons why we are not paying close enough attention to what we are reading, but when we read our Bibles, we should be truly trying to understand what we are reading and seeking to discover how the text should be applied to our lives. The Bereans were called "*noble*" by the Holy Spirit - not because they merely read the Scriptures, but because they "*searched the Scriptures daily*" for the Truth, to find out what they needed to do to please God! (Acts 17:11). If we will have the approval of God, we must be workers who "*study*" the Word of God and learn how to use it properly: "*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*"

(2 Timothy 2:15). Paul stressed to the Ephesians the importance of not merely reading, but understanding what they read: *"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ); "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Ephesians 3:4; 5:17). Let us not merely read our Bibles – let us study them so that we will understand what the will of the Lord is for our lives!

Don't just study it – live it! Again it could be said that there are many who know the Bible like the backs of their hands, but they are not living by it. Jesus said that we are to live by the Word: *"...It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). Jesus also taught that the wise man is the one who *"heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them"* (Matthew 7:24), but the foolish man is the one who *"heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not"* (Matthew 7:26). James wrote that we are deceiving ourselves if we think that we can be pleasing to God without living by His Word: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"* (James 1:22). There are many today who learn the truth and refuse to obey it, yet they say, *"...but I read my Bible every night!"* Merely reading the Bible without applying the text to our lives is very foolish, knowing that we will be judged by the Word of God (John 12:48). The person who has read the Bible every day without living by it will not enter Heaven any sooner than the person who has never read one word of it! (Matthew 7:21). Therefore, let us not merely study the Word of God – let us live by it!

Don't just live it – teach it! There seems to be a popular misconception among people who call themselves Christians that a person can live a life that is pleasing to God without ever trying to convert anyone. Some may say that if we want to convert people we just need to live pure lives before the lost and refrain from doing sinful things. However, the Bible does not say that *"faith cometh by seeing someone live a good moral life."* The Bible says, *"...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"* (Romans 10:17). Keeping one's self unspotted from the world is an important part of pure and undefiled religion (James 1:27), but merely refraining from doing sinful things is not going to convert others to Christianity – they have to hear the Word of God! We need to be doing what Jesus commanded us to do: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..."* (Matthew 28:19, 20). If we are really living by the Word, we will be obeying the commands found therein to teach others!

The Word of God is one of the greatest gifts God has given us. We should be so thankful to be able to own copies of it. However, let us not merely own a copy of the Word of God – let us read it, study it, live by it, and teach it to others!

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