

READ YOUR BIBLE !

Ever wish God would just talk to you? Tell you what's what and what He wants you to do? He has and He does! Hearing from Him and doing what He says will make all the difference in your daily life. One of my seminary professors was famous for saying, "*Don't you people ever read your Bibles?*" Then he could quote verbatim page after page, because of years of daily personal engagement with the Bible.

Hebrews 1 says, "*Long ago, at many times and in many places, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*" Are you listening to Him?

1- God speaks to you. God speaks in three major ways. First, through His creation which He spoke into existence, and which proclaims His existence. Second, His written Word, the Bible, which proclaims God's character and redemption. Third, through the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, who personally reveals God's truth and grace. The Holy Spirit speaks God's truth through these means to all who listen.

2- God wrote it all down. So there can be no mistake about what God has said, He wrote it down. The same holy breath of God which breathed out all things into existence also breathed out everything God wants mankind to know. Through more than 40 human authors over a period of some 2,000 years, God preserved exactly what you need to know, as He provides you with His written Word, the Bible.

The Bible is still the best-selling book of all time, for good reason. No where else can you receive the personal revelation of God. Truth is defined as "*that which corresponds to reality, as perceived by God*" who alone knows all things. The Bible is the place to go to find out what God thinks about anything.

3- Hear from God every day. How? By reading His written Word. DL.Moody used to say about the Bible, "*this book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.*" The Bible is your source of spiritual nutrition. Daily intake of God's Word is required for spiritual growth. Only by putting God's truth into your life, heart, mind, and will, can you overcome the constant lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, it is by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. One of His major sanctifying ministries is to illuminate the truths of Scripture, so that you are not only a hearer of God's Word, but a doer, as He transforms your life to be more like Christ. As Neil Anderson says, "*the Holy Spirit guides us through a knowledge of God's Word and His will established in our minds.*"

4- Choose a Bible reading plan. We just have no excuse today for not reading God's Word every day. You can have it in written form, audio form, digital form, and more. There's an app for that! It can show up in your email or smartphone every day. Get your favorite Bible, note the publisher, go to their website, and you'll find numerous resources to help you engage God's Word on a regular basis. Sites like Biblia, BibleGateway, Biblehub and many more provide you with numerous translations to compare. Many offer specific Bible reading plans to assist you, some with original language helps, commentaries, etc.

For example, my go-to Bible is the English Standard Version (ESV), an "essentially literal" translation in contemporary English which emphasizes word-for-word accuracy, literary excellence, and depth of meaning. Available since 2001, it was the first Bible published simultaneously in print and digital formats. It is available free at ESV.org along with subscriptions for various resources, including language, literary, archaeological, theological, commentary helps, all which greatly enhance your personal Bible study. The companion site Crossway.org also features devotional reading plans to accompany your Bible reading.

5- Read the whole Bible in a year. An audio recording of the Bible is about 75 hours in length, or 12 minutes per day. Most people can read faster than that. Would you carve out ten minutes to hear from Almighty God Himself, to speak directly to your life situation each day? Numerous 7-day and 5-day weekly plans take you through the entire Bible, either in published order or with both Old and New Testament selections (*many listed at challies.com and at ligonier.org/blog/bible-reading-plans*).

My preference is a daily chronological plan, which greatly increases personal understanding of God's unfolding plan of redemption. It's the approach Riverside Church follows on its Facebook page, which features two daily devotionals to accompany daily Scripture readings, to aid your personal application.

6- Get started today! Whether your interest is personal Bible reading, family devotions, or Bible study, you can find a resource tailored to your needs. You will personally profit from putting God's Word into your head and heart, and living it out in your life, by the power of the Holy Spirit. God says so in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*" In coming weeks, we'll unpack this passage and many more, as we explore how to read, understand, and apply the Bible to your life. That's Good News to start a happy new year! ☐