

SESSION 2: Back to the Basics in Bible Reading

“Gentlemen, this is a football!”

Vince Lombardi, to the Green Bay Packers, at the beginning of each training season.

I. The Word is a gift, all too often ignored by those to whom it is given. . .

- Isaiah 55:10-11

- 1 Peter 1:23-25

- James 1:18

- Matthew 4:4

- 1 Thessalonians 2:13

- Romans 10:17

- John 17:17

- Psalm 19:7-11

- Acts 20:32

- Hebrews 4:12

II. A Few Bible-Reading Strategies

A. Basic Literacy

1. Read for Basic Literacy
2. What does this look like?
 - a. Reading large chunks of the Bible.
 - b. “Bulk” reading.
 - c. Fairly rapid reading.
3. Goal is basic literacy.
 - a. You want a big picture.
 - b. You are discovering the larger context of the Bible
4. This is the “read-through the Bible” strategy.
5. Do it early in growth, perhaps first 2-4 years.
6. A strategy often repeated on a small scale.

B. Bible Knowledge

1. Read for Bible Knowledge
2. What does this look like?
 - a. Biblical theme studies
 - b. Bible character studies
 - c. Bible book studies
 - d. Characterized by topical study from diverse passages.
 - e. Reading style varies from rapid, bulk reading to intensive and thoughtful.

- f. May be guided by a study book of some sort.
 - g. But be sure that the bulk of your reading is from the Bible.
3. Goal is collection and organization of biblical data from your reading.
- a. You may pick subject areas where your knowledge is lacking.
 - b. You may pick subject areas in which you have a natural interest.
 - c. Many other factors might drive your choice.
 - d. This is probably the more common strategy as you grow as a believer.
 - e. The Holy Spirit will make powerful applications on the text as He will.

C. Practical Wisdom

- 1. Read for Practical Wisdom, often regarding special needs
- 2. What does this look like?
 - a. You are typically studying selected books (Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or NT books)
 - b. You are reading with a problem or question in mind.
 - c. Your reading is usually very slow and thoughtful, with much personal application.
 - d. You are checking out cross-references.
- 3. Goal is to gain a biblical mindset about the issues of life.
 - a. You are learning to apply specific scriptures to specific problems
 - b. You are getting God's perspective on an issue.
 - c. May be general, not related to a current issue (salting away practical knowledge in advance)
 - d. May be problem-oriented, to solve an issue with which you are presently confronted

- e. You are usually learning a great deal of personal application.
 - f. This can be the most rewarding study style of all, over the short term.
4. Why not always read for practical wisdom, if it is so rewarding?
- a. Your view of Scripture becomes problem-centered, rather than Christ-centered.
 - b. Because you can remain illiterate regarding the rest of the Bible.
 - c. You'll fail to develop doctrinal discernment.

D. Practical Tips

1. Never, never play catch-up. NEVER!
2. Mix things up when it gets dry.
3. Leave a study briefly, then come back to it. Use your journal to keep your place.
4. Occasionally work through a book like Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, or A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, or John Piper, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*
5. Do not worry if you are unable to remember what you've read.
6. Do not worry if you are not always understanding what you have read.
7. Do not worry if you are not always getting profound insight.
8. The key is to develop and keep the discipline.
9. You are exposing your heart to the Word; trust the Holy Spirit to apply it as He will.

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