

VII. Ministry Series—Why and How to Read the Bible

Directions for the student of The Ministry Series: Focus on one question at a time. Read the question and answers. Look up scripture whenever possible, because reading the bible passages will help you understand the concepts and remember them more clearly. Learn the underlined parts of the answers. Be able to say the underlined parts, either in your own words, or by quoting word-for-word. When learning scripture, be able to say the scripture reference and the underlined parts, using either the NKJV (quoted here), or another translation (show your tester). Repetition aids memorization. Therefore ask three different people to test you, so that you are tested **three separate times on every item.** You may study the questions in any order you want. You may answer a question a little at a time, with study intervals between test sessions. If you answer a question a little at a time, ask your tester to check the parts of the answer you know with small check marks (and put their small initials on their check marks). Ask your tester to sign the left margin when you know all the parts of a question. You have completed a question when it has three different signatures in the margin beside it. Have fun!

1. Why is bible study so important? (This is a review question from the Ministry Series notes, “Love, Humility, Service.” Know all five of these.)

a. Reading the bible increases your faith:

Romans 10:17 *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

b. Reading the bible enables you to know the truth which sets you free:

John 8:31-32 *Jesus said...“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

c. Reading the bible converts your soul: it changes your mind, your will, and your emotions, and enables you to become more like Christ:

Psalms 19:7 *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*

d. Reading the bible enables you to know God personally

John 14:21 [Jesus speaking] *“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”*

e. Reading the bible increases favor and blessing upon you, as you walk in obedience to its commands.

James 1:25 *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

2. What are two main reasons to read the word of God and obey what it says?

First, to know God personally.

Second, to convert your soul and become more like Christ.

3. What is the soul?

The soul is the mind, the will and the emotions. It is the part of every Christian which is changed by the process of walking in obedience to the word of God.

4. What are three things to realize about the soul? (Know three.)

a. Your soul can be enslaved by the world system. In the book of Revelation, “Babylon” is a depiction of satan’s world system. Amongst the merchandise it buys and sells are: Rev. 18:13 “..and bodies and souls of men.” See Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36.

b. Reading the word of God is not enough by itself to convert the soul. We must actively work together with the Holy Spirit by choosing to listen and obey.

This is part of the cost of discipleship, taking up our cross daily and following Jesus Christ, Mark 8:34-37. We work out our own salvation with God's help, Phil. 2:12-13.

c. The process of converting the soul, called sanctification, is not easy or quick. It takes a lifetime. No living person has completed it, Phil. 1:6. Yet at the same time, we can choose to become more completely sanctified by the choices we make day by day. It is possible to have a holy, powerful walk in Christ, as exemplified by people in the NT like Peter, Paul and Stephen. More contemporary examples are Brother Andrew, Smith Wigglesworth and Kathryn Kuhlman.

5. How can you make your bible study time better? (Review: Know five plus Prov. 6:23)

- a. Read daily, as early in the day as possible.
- b. Always pray before you read. Ask the Lord to teach you, because He promised He would, John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 2:20, 27.
- c. Have a plan as you read. Ask the Lord to help you read systematically through the bible. For example, start at the book of John and read one chapter a day. Then read Matthew, Mark and Luke. Then read the rest of the New Testament. Then read Psalms and Proverbs. Last of all read the Old Testament. Once you have done this, seek the Lord for another plan. For example, read some of Psalms and Proverbs everyday, plus two chapters in the NT, plus two to four chapters in the OT. Read, reread, study. Don't be in a hurry. Meditate on it, think about it, absorb it. Memorize it.
- d. Read actively. Mark your bible up, write in the margins, color code verses. (J. Vernon McGee used to say that if you can't write in your bible, you had better throw that one away and get yourself a bible you can write in!)
- e. Ask God to explain verses. He will. When God speaks to you, write it down! (Write in the margins of your bible, or use a bible study notebook to write down what you have read that day, verses that spoke to you, and any word the Lord gives you.)
- f. Never substitute reading devotionals for reading the bible. God's word is living, not other people's words about His word. God wants you to read and study for yourself. He wants to teach you, and He will, if you are actively reading His word.
- g. Don't just read, ask the Lord to help you apply what you read. There are many blessings for those who apply what they read, James 1:22-25; Joshua 1:8; 1 Timothy 4:12-16.
- h. Allow the word of God to correct you. Remember that correction is a blessing, always: Proverbs 6:23 *For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light. Reproofs of instruction are the way of life.* (also see Psalm 141:5)

6. What are four important attitudes to have as you read the bible? (Know four.)

- a. Read the bible in order to know God and love Him more completely by obeying Him. John 14:15, 21, 23 [Jesus said,] ""If you love Me, keep My commandments...He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...If anyone loves Me, he will keep my word."
- b. Always read the bible to receive instruction and correction for yourself, not for someone else. Phil. 2:12 says work out your own salvation, not someone else's. For example, when you read the book of Proverbs, realize that you are both the wise and the foolish man, they both reside in you. Receive instruction and correction from Proverbs so that you can become much wiser--and less foolish.
- c. Always receive the word of God in faith. The word of God does not help a person who does not receive it in faith,

Hebrews 4:2 *For indeed, the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word of God which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

d. Be careful to never add to the word of God, or take away from it, Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19.

7. List three places in the Bible where scripture warns us not to add to the word of God or take away from it. (Know three references)

Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19.

8. How can you understand the bible better? (Know five of these)

a. Always pray before you read. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you, as Jesus promised He would, John 14:26; 16:13; 1 John 2:20, 27. Spiritual things must be understood spiritually, 1 Corinthians 2:12-16.

b. Always consider the context. Read the verses before and after a passage to better understand that passage.

c. When interpreting scripture, always compare it to other scriptures on the same topic. Search scripture for “two or three witnesses,” that is, two or three places which say the same thing, Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17.

d. Add passages together in order to get the most complete picture. For example, to better understand Jesus’ life on earth, study at all four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, plus verses in the book of Acts. Put all of these accounts together.

e. If you still don’t understand a passage, then pray, wait and listen. The Holy Spirit may give you understanding through other passages of scripture, through another person, or over time as you meditate on a principle and apply it, see Psalm 119:99-100.

f. Remember that some passages of scripture will not be understood until they come to pass. For example, Old Testament passages about the Messiah, His birth, His life, ministry and death were not understood until Jesus lived and died, 1 Cor. 2:7-8.

Similarly, there are prophetic passages in Daniel 7 and the book of Revelation which have not yet come to pass, and will only be fully understood after their fulfillment. Don’t try to impose a man-made interpretation on something which God has not yet revealed.

Don’t believe those who say they understand prophecy about the end times. They don’t.

g. Meditation helps. You can meditate on a passage by repeating it out loud, eventually memorizing it. Consider it, think on it. Meditation increases understanding:

Psalm 119:99 *I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.*

h. Some things are best understood by obeying them. Abraham did not understand why God told him to leave his country. Noah did not understand why God told him to build an ark. Moses did not understand why God sent him back to Egypt. They just obeyed, and understanding followed. Similarly, we may not understand something until we obey:

Psalm 111:10 *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments*

Psalm 119:100 *I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.*

Additional Helps. Two online sites recommended by Pastor Johnny Davis are

www.swordsearcher.com and Dakes Study Bible software. An application I find helpful is the Strong’s Concordance mobile application which can quickly give meanings of Greek and Hebrew words.