

Highlight (Scripture references and Introduction.)

John 1:1-5

Reading God's word sounds like something that all believers would do naturally. Sadly, many studies show that too many professing Christians read very little in God's word or don't ever read any of God's word.

A story is told about a man who was a recent convert to Christianity. He was involved in a tragic accident and was burned on his face, losing his sight. On top of that, he lost both of his hands in that same accident. One of the things he said he missed most was not being able to read God's word.

He soon came across a story about a woman who learned to read braille with her lips, and he sought help in obtaining a braille copy of the Bible. Unfortunately he discovered that the nerve endings in his lips were too damaged for him to feel with them. He accidentally touched the braille with his tongue and discovered he could learn to read with his tongue!

Now if a person in that situation could do that, what excuse have we for not disciplining ourselves to read God's word? It does take discipline for us to systematically be in God's word each and every day.

❖ Teachers, in a world that is moving further and further away from God, those of us who claim to be followers of Christ need to be students of the word more and more consistently. Remind you class that we need to be more disciplined in our walk with Christ. The best way to be obedient to Him is to know what He has told us in His word. There is no substitute for the Bible. It is His "Love Letter" to us, as He has revealed Himself to us in it.

Explain (Context and Commentary for the Scriptures.)

Point 1: Is God's Word being read? Read: Jeremiah 17:5-10; Romans 3:9-18

Discuss: Left to our own devices, mankind will become whatever his heart leads him to. *"I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings."* Jeremiah 17:10. Mankind needs guidance in order to live life together with others. There are many "codes" to live by and many worldviews that try to give mankind the balance he/she needs. But none of the current worldviews prevalent in our society or the world today provides the way for mankind to live up to the standard

that God has set forth in His word. It is amazing the lengths mankind will go to avoid admitting that God is the only one who provides the best plan for mankind to live in the world. For the believer, that guidance comes from the Word of God. The Bible is God's way of revealing Himself to mankind.

Statistics show that less and less people say they are reading the Bible on a daily basis. Some could take solace in the fact that those surveys were taken across the board of professing believers and non-believers. However, a Barna study shows that only 18% of those claiming to be "born-again Christians" say they read their Bible on a daily basis. These numbers are pretty fairly matched by the studies on church attendance over the same amount of time. It would make sense that the fewer number of people who are attending church would correlate to fewer numbers of people who are reading His word. One could make the case that the fewer number of people reading God's word leads to fewer people attending His Church! But both should be alarming concerning the state of in 21st century America. No one would dispute the downward trends of the state of the nation as far as Christianity is concerned. It is hard to live by the Bible if people are not reading from it.

Jesus often asked those He came in contact with if they understood the scriptures, "Have you not read ...? (Matthew 19:4; Mark 12:10). It is clear that He expected people to be familiar with the whole word of God. Jesus told the evil one that *"Man should not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). He means for us to know all of God's word. Every word means what it says every, each and every one! How can we live by every word that comes from the mouth of God if we haven't read every word?

Since *"all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness"* (2 Timothy 3:16), shouldn't we read it?

❖ **Further Commentary.** Teachers, remind your class that we need to be encouraging each other to be "The people of the Book". We need not take it for granted that our people are in God's word on a daily basis. First we need to be sure we are reading God's word ourselves, and then encourage each other to be doing the same.

▫ **Questions:**

1. If you had to describe the state of the United States of America in 2021 in one sentence, what would you say?
2. What would you say is the reason there is so much division in our country right now?
3. How does the fact there are so many voices saying we ought to go in this or that direction keep confusion at the forefront in our society?

Point 2: Why we should be reading God's Word. 2 Timothy 3:10-12

Discuss: We should read the Bible because it is God's Word to us. The Bible is the most amazing book ever written. It was written over a span of around 1,400 to 1,500 years and yet it is connected by God Himself. He is the inspiration of the entire book and it gives us our knowledge of who He is and how He wants to redeem mankind back to Himself. The Bible has answers to all of mankind's questions concerning such things as "What is the purpose of life?" "Why is there evil in the world?" "Why do we struggle to do good?" Besides those challenging "big" questions, the Bible gives us so much practical guidance in areas of marriage, how to be a friend, what is success and how to achieve it, what really matters in life, how to live without regrets and so much more.

We should read the Bible because it is totally reliable and without error. There are over 10,000 "proofs" as to the authenticity of the Bible. The Bible gives us the ability to test it by checking the hundreds of detailed prophecies that it makes, by checking the historical accounts it records, and by checking the scientific facts it relates. We can also rely on the spiritual areas that we cannot test by our senses because the Bible shows itself true in those areas that we can test, such as historical accuracy, scientific accuracy, and prophetic accuracy.

We should read the Bible because God does not change and because mankind's nature does not change; it is as relevant for us as it was when it was written. While technology and many other things change, mankind's nature and desires do not change. When it comes to mankind the Bible reminds us that whether we are talking about one on one relationships or society as a whole, *"there is nothing new under the sun"* (Ecclesiastes 1:9). God gave us His word so we would know what will bring us lasting joy. He also knows the hearts of all mankind, and He knows because of our natural bent toward rebelliousness, without His revealed word we would be lost!

We should read the Bible because there is so much false teaching. The Bible gives us the measuring stick by which we can distinguish truth from error. His word tells us what He is like so we don't get the wrong impression of Him when the world tries to tell us otherwise.

- ❖ **Further Commentary.** Teachers, discuss the importance of using discipline when it comes to making time to read God's word. Remind them that spending time in God's word does not come naturally. It is not something we spend time doing without it being something we discipline ourselves to do. It seems the world's problems, stresses, schedules and anything else we allow to keep us away from that time take precedence instead.

▫ **Questions:**

1. Where would mankind be if it were not for the Bible?
2. Why do you think so many people want to ignore God's word as being true?
3. What are some substitutes mankind wants to use instead of the Bible?

Point 3: Results of reading God's Word. 2 Timothy 3:13-17

Discuss: The Bible equips us to serve God (2 Timothy 3:17; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12). It helps us know how to be saved from our sin and its ultimate consequence (2 Timothy 3:15).

Reading the Bible helps us see beyond the attractive "bait" to the painful "hook" in sinful temptations, so that we can learn from others' mistakes rather than making them ourselves. Experience is a great teacher, but when it comes to learning from sin, it is a terribly hard teacher. It is so much better to learn from others' mistakes. There are so many Bible characters to learn from, some of whom can serve as both positive and negative role models at different times in their lives. For example, the story of David, in his defeat of Goliath, teaches us that God is greater than anything He puts in our lives to do (1 Samuel 17), then David turns around and gives in to the temptation to commit adultery with Bathsheba. That experience reveals just how long-lasting and terrible the consequences of a moment's sinful pleasure can be (2 Samuel 11).

The importance of the Bible is impossible to overstate. Throughout the ages, countless men and women have written volumes to underscore the significance of the Scriptures. But we should not take any human's word for it. What the Bible tells us about itself is all that matters.

- ❖ **Further Commentary.** Teachers, remind your class that the Word of God is eternal: *"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever"* (Isaiah 40:8). Truth is eternal: *"The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever"* (Psalm 119:160, ESV). How can we doubt the importance of the Bible, when we read, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away"* (Matthew 24:35). We need to remember that one of the main reasons it is important to discipline ourselves is to glorify God.

▫ **Questions:**

1. What would you say is the biggest benefit to reading God's word?
2. If we aren't disciplined in the reading of God's word, what would be some of the results?
3. In our busy lives, is it possible to become involved in even church things to the extent we don't spend enough time reading God's word?

Application (What does God want me to do?)

We have discussed the studies done that show the vast majority of people, including professing Christians, do not spend time daily reading God's word. What steps have you taken to make sure that reading the Bible is a daily part of your life? There are some things you can do to help discipline yourself to read the Bible every day. There are many reading plans available to help in the discipline of reading the Bible. The important thing to do is make the time available to be in God's word daily. Besides the time, a place is very important in making Bible reading happen. We need that place that you can set up so you won't be disturbed as you spend time with God in His word.

Respond (What specific commitment will I make?)

What will you do to allow God to work in your life to make the discipline of spending time in God's word a reality. Is there a place you can set aside to be alone with God each day? Of all reading plans that provide an opportunity to read through the Bible that you are aware of, is there one you will commit to start that will help you discipline yourself to read portions of the Bible each day.

Additional Study Resources

1. Additional Bible Study tools are available at www.biblecc.com.
2. Additional Bible Study tools are available at www.biblegateway.com.

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