**PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLE READING**

Sunday School Lesson 5

*Bible Principles for Daily Living*

Nehemiah 8:3-18

7/10/2022

**Introduction:** Through our first four lessons on Bible principles for daily living, we have looked at the principles for life, principles for discipleship, principles for time management, and principles for being a citizen. For our fifth lesson, we are going to examine Bible principles for our daily Bible reading. I think we can all agree that it’s important for families to be in a Bible-preaching, Bible-believing church, but we should also all agree that it’s equally as important for families to Bible-reading, Bible-teaching, and Bible-believing families. God has given us the ability to fellowship with Him through His Word. In Genesis 3, God showed up daily to walk and talk with Adam and Eve because He wanted to fellowship with them. Part of that fellowship was Adam talking to God, but God also wanted to talk to him. Even after Adam had fallen in sin, God still came looking for him to fellowship with him in the Garden. Sadly, Adam’s sin required for that personal, physical fellowship to be broken. Yet, God still made a way for us to fellowship with Him. While God wants to speak to us, the question is whether we are willing to stop and listen to Him. Are we telling God that we are not interested in what He has to say when we read the Bible so little? God is telling us all about Himself through His Word, so we should try to learn as much about Him as we can. We should learn what pleases Him. We should learn what makes Him angry. Let’s consider some principles about our Bible reading.

1. **WE MUST APPROACH OUR BIBLE READING WITH AN APPROPRIATE APPETITE FOR IT.**
2. **Notice that an appropriate appetite means that we recognize our daily need to read the Word of God (Neh. 8:3-18; 9:3; Deut. 17:19; 1 Timothy 4:13; 1 Peter 2:2; Psalm 119:97, 147; Acts 17:11).** The first and most obvious principle for Bible reading is that it needs to be done daily. Before there was ever a king on the throne of Israel, Moses had already received a commandment from God that the king should read the Bible daily. We talk so much about David being a man after God’s own heart, and most folks talk about how David loved God and sought forgiveness when he failed as a king to serve the Lord. What other quality do we see in David that indicates his relationship with the Lord? I believe it was his daily commitment to Bible reading. David talked about how much he loved the Word of God. All of the words of the Bible were sweet words to him. I think we understand the analogy. It is not hard to have an appetite for sweet things. The men of Berea were said to be more noble than the men of Thessalonica. What was it about them that made them more noble? The Bible tells us that they searched the Scriptures daily. They wanted to know what God had to say. They had a great appetite for His Word.
3. **Notice that an appropriate appetite means that we recognize our daily need to receive the Word of God (2 Kings 23:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Deut. 8:3; Matthew 4:4; Psalm 119:103, 161; Acts 17:11).** The second thing that made the men of Berea more noble was that they received the Word of God with all readiness of mind. As believers, we are not to do anything for the Lord with a callous or indifferent attitude. Serving Him should not be seen to us as just a chore. We give cheerfully, and we ought to read His Word with openness to truly receive It. We need to recognize just how much we need it. We don’t just need It read every day, but we need It received. Regarding God’s Word, David said that he stood in awe of It. He delighted in the Word. As parents, we need to teach our children to both daily read and daily receive the Word. Help them understand that they are not reading just to read. They are reading because they love God. They are reading because they understand that they truly need what It says. They are reading because they desire to be more like Christ. How do we teach our children this? We start by being an example of it. We must have this principle in our own Bible reading.
4. **WE MUST APPROACH OUR BIBLE READING WITH APPROPRIATE UNDERSTANDING.**

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1. **Notice that it is essential to have understanding when reading God’s Word (Matthew 13:19-23; 24:15; John 8:43; Neh. 8:3-13; Psalm 119:130, 169; Proverbs 1:6; 4:5; 15:32; Acts 8:30; Eph. 3:4).** In the parable of the sower and the seed, we find that there are some who hear the Word of God, but they do not continue in It. Thus, It does not take root and produce fruit. What is the reason for this? The Lord said that there are some who hear, but they do not understand. In fact, reading/hearing the Word of God without understanding is a sign of spiritual ignorance and potentially a hardened heart. The nation of Israel had teachers who had instructed them for generations in the Word of God. Their lack of understanding of the Bible was a result of their spiritual blindness that had come through rejecting the Lord over and over again. For the eunuch that Philip witnessed to, his lack of understand was based in the fact that he did not have any teachers. As believers, we have the greatest teacher in the Holy Spirit of God (John 14:26). We are without excuse when it comes to reading the Word with understanding.
2. **Notice that the more Bible we read, the more we should be able to understand (Psalm 119:99; Mark 8:21; 1 Timothy 1:7; 2 Timothy 2:7-15; 3:7; Nehemiah 8:8; Proverbs 18:13).** This has two-fold application. First, this speaks directly to how we read the Bible. There are many people who read one verse and then claim that they don’t understand the Bible. Might it be that they just simply didn’t read enough to understand It? Only a foolish person would answer a matter before he has heard the full sum of it. As we read our Bible, we need to commit to reading It thoroughly. Sometimes, we don’t do this because we think that we don’t have the time for it. We cram in a couple of verses, and we hope that will be sufficient enough for us. It is not surprising that we then struggle to deal with the world, the flesh, and the Devil. The second part of this is the fact that the Bible shows us that understanding comes by the Bible. This is a really interesting thought. We need understanding when reading the Bible, but we also get understanding by reading the Bible. Why is this? The Bible is a Book with perfect harmony. It all fits in together due to God’s divine wisdom. Understanding some of It helps to understand all of It.
3. **WE MUST APPROACH OUR BIBLE READING WITH APPROPRIATE MEDITATION.**
4. **Notice that meditation should extend far beyond just our set daily Bible reading times (Psalm 1:2; 19:14; 119:97, 99, 148; 1 Timothy 4:5).** When most people talk about meditation, they think of it as spending a few extra minutes after their Bible reading to think about what they have read. While that meditation should take place, meditation should not stop there. We are to meditate day and night. Thus, we are to be in a continual state of meditation. What does that mean? It simply means that we ought to be thinking about what we have read and received in the Bible as we go throughout our day. What good does it do to only meditate upon our reading after it happens? We are to put that reading into practice. How can we do that if we are not still thinking about what we read in the Word of God? I wonder how often we remember what we read in the morning by the time we come back home in the evening. Do we even remember it by lunch time? The Christian will have greater joy when he gets to a place where he truly is meditating on the Word of God day and night.
5. **Notice that meditation upon the Word of God helps us to obey and observe the Lord’s commandments (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119:15, 48, 101; Proverbs 3:6).** As mentioned above, we need to meditate on the Word of God throughout the day because that meditation helps us to follow through on what we have read. In order to obey His commandments, we have to know and remember His commandments. How can we acknowledge Him in all of our ways and have Him direct our paths if we spend so little time meditating on what His way is? Meditating on the Word of God keeps us from sin. When church members ask for counsel in getting victory over sin, my first answer to them is to spend more time meditating on the Bible. Keep Bible verses on a card in your pocket. Think over them all throughout your day. It’s hard to fall into temptation when you are constantly meditating upon the Word of God. Think of meditating as constantly eating the Bread of Life. When you stay full of this Bread, it’s hard to hunger after other things. Starve out your flesh and continually feed your spirit.
6. **WE MUST APPROACH OUR BIBLE READING WITH APPROPRIATE FELLOWSHIP.**
7. **Notice that the Bible shows us the need for reading the Word together with others (Exodus 24:7; Deut. 31:11; Joshua 8:34-35; 2 Kings 23:2; Neh. 8:3-18; 13:14; Acts 13:27; 15:21; Colossians 4:16).** Reading the Bible and studying it is not something that is left to just the individual. The Bible shows a plethora of examples where the Bible was read in a group. Obviously, for the nation of Israel and Moses, the Bible had to be read aloud at first, as there were not copies made yet. For later generations, though, we still see times where the Bible was read together. Of course, the Bible was read every week in the synagogues, and it was read daily in the churches. We live in a day where more and more people claim that they do not need to go to church. They claim that they can read the Bible on their own. While they can certainly read the Bible for themselves, there is a clear principle in the Bible that shows the benefit and necessity of collective Bible reading. There is accountability and exhortation in shared Bible reading.
8. **Notice that there should be a distinction made between Bible reading and Bible teaching (1 Timothy 6:5; 1:7; Romans 14:1; Acts 19:8-9; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; 2 Peter 2:1).** While we see the principle of Bible reading with others, we must be careful in this to have a clear distinction between Bible reading and teaching. When we come to church, we do not just come for the reading of the Bible. We come to hear the preaching and teaching that goes along with the reading. When parents read the Bible with their children, there should be teaching that accompanies it. That’s our responsibility as parents to teach them. Where the Bible is read, there is teaching that accompanies it. When you are doing it privately, it is the Holy Spirit that teaches. When the Bible is read publicly, there is someone who is the teacher. The reading of the Bible is not meant for debates and disputes. It is meant to edify us.