

- ***Read Joshua 1:8*** As the Lord speaks to Joshua in preparing him to lead the people into the promised land, He takes a moment to give strong advice to Joshua that he be sure to keep the Book of the Law close to his heart. He was to meditate on it day and night. He was to make sure that he did according to all that was contained within the book. In doing these things, the Lord says that his way would be prosperous. What allowed these things to happen? Well, Joshua had to make sure to give time and attention to the reading of the Book of the Law. In giving time to its reading, Joshua would be made prosperous as he fulfilled the Lord's command for him.
- We must recognize that the same kind of desires are for us as well in the eyes of God. God wants for us to be prosperous and successful in Him and those things can be done if we are committed to the continual reading of God's word. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul instructs the younger preacher to give great attention to public reading of Scripture. **(I Tim. 4:13)** Why did Paul say that this was something so important? It must be because continual reading of God's Word helps for the reader to grow in their faith and service to God.
- Because this is the case, there are many articles written that give good tips that are designed to help people become more dedicated and effective in their reading of God's Word. I ran across one such article recently that attempted to do this very thing. The Babylon Bee gave 10 super helpful tips for Bible reading that I would like for us to list and consider a few moments.
 - 1) Select the Bible that looks the coolest.
 - 2) Broadcast study time to the whole world.
 - 3) Pray that God will show you how great you are.
 - 4) Don't be too committed to Bible reading.
 - 5) Don't give too much attention to the context.
 - 6) Draw elaborate doodles all over the Text.
 - 7) Allegorize literally everything.
 - 8) Make the text apply to everyone but yourself.
 - 9) Remember that God emphasizes that we don't judge.
 - 10) Remember that Bible reading is all about you.
- This is a great list, right?? Well if you think so then we probably need to take a talk here in a few minutes. In case you're unaware, The Babylon Bee is a religious satire site that employs humor and sarcasm to convey truths about many things pertaining to mostly Christianity. Some might find this type of thing distasteful and that's fine if they do, but I believe this type of thing to be good because sometimes the truth isn't really recognized until the absurdity of it is shown. Obviously, these 10 helpful tips are garbage and we all recognize that when they are written like this, but the truth is that some people actually operate in this manner when it comes to reading their Bibles. We just don't realize it till someone is actually willing to point it out even if it is in a humorous sort of way.
- Again, let me be clear...I don't believe these are good tips, but I do want to share 10 actually helpful tips for Bible reading that can help us be more successful in those endeavors. This church puts a lot of emphasis on daily Bible reading. We believe it to be of the utmost importance and because of it we have a daily Bible reading schedule and I often preach from those Texts that we have read. This evening, I'd like to share some tips that can help us in our efforts to be good Bible students. This list is inspired by the list we were befooled with from the Babylon Bee.

10 Truly Helpful Bible Reading Tips

I. Select a functional Bible.

- A. The book that many of us hold in our hands is not just another book, but it is God's inspired Word. **(II Tim. 3:16,17)** It is the Book that can teach us how to be exactly what God wants us to be, and in order to know these things we must be able to read the book.
- B. Far too often we get focused on the wrong things in many different aspects of life. We focus on those flashy features without giving attention to the important substance. We need to use Bibles that help us in our reading. Bibles that are good translations, lay outs, etc can help us in our Bible reading efforts.

II. Focus on growth, not other's perception of you.

- A. When we care so much about letting people know about how we're studying the Bible then often we don't have any attention left to actually reading and studying the Bible. Many people simple want to give off the perception that they are spiritual when in reality it is nothing more than a facade.
- B. When doing anything that is good and spiritual in nature, we are not to do so simply to improve our perception in the eyes of others, but we are to do so because we see them as being good things to do. **(Matt. 6:1-6)**

III. Pray that God will help you grow in Christ.

- A. The point of Bible reading is so that we can come to know God's will for us in this life so that we can be successful and prosper in Him. More than likely, we will quickly recognize that there are things that we can change an need to improve on.
- B. We need to have the mindset going in that we simply want to grow to be more like Jesus. We want to grow into spiritual maturity and that can happen with God's help. We need to seek His help and favor and grow in wisdom through our Bible reading. **(James 1:2-5)**

IV. Be diligent in your Bible reading.

- A. Growing in faith through reading of the Bible requires much diligence. **(II Tim. 2:15)**
- B. Just like our bodies, if we only every do those things that make us strong and healthy every now and then.....we're probably not going to be all that strong and healthy. We must constantly be in God's Word so that we do not become weak in our knowledge of it.

V. Give great attention to the context.

- A. Knowing the context is so important in Bible reading and really it's just important in life in general. We might see one man tackle another man in the parking lot of the grocery store. We might be ready to jump in and help the man that has been tackled, but we might very well be helping the wrong guy cause we haven't observed the context of what has happened. We didn't see the guy steal a woman's purse just a few seconds before. Context matters.
- B. We might be reading through the latter chapters of John's Gospel **(John 13-17)** and see Jesus making all of the promises about seeing the Holy Spirit as a personal helping our faith. We might get all excited and look for these promises of Jesus to be fulfilled, but sadly we would be waiting a long time because those promises were not made to us. Again, context matters.

VI. Use effective means that will help with your reading .

- A. The goal of our Bible reading to to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God's will for us. If we find something that helps us achieve these things then we need to take advantage of them and stick with them.
- B. For some people, bible marking and coloring might be something that helps them to know the Text better. Doodling Bibles are popular right now. Some people might use margins to help make little notes. Other people might really be helped by listening to the Bible on audio. Whatever helps us...we need to use them and let them help us grow.

VII. Give effort to understand the text properly.

- A. Some people really do seek to allegorize and spiritualize all of the writings of Scripture, but surely we recognize that this just isn't an appropriate approach to the handling of the Text.
- B. We need to recognize that there are many things in Scripture that need to simply be taken literally. Let's begin with Jesus. He was just just some made up person who is simply recorded to teach us some kind of lesson, but He really lived, taught, and died for us and rose again on the third day. Paul was so convinced of the reality of Jesus that he told individuals to go and talk to some others who were I witnesses to Jesus being real and alive. **(I Corinthians 15:3-8)**
- C. Surely there are some things that are allegorical and figurative in Scripture, but those things can almost always be easily recognized through the context.

VIII. Focus on how the text can make yourself better, first.

- A. Back to **II Timothy 3:16,17**, we recognize that the Bible was given to us in order for us to be made complete as people of God.
- B. While there are certainly things that we can use to help others, let's not forget that our first responsibility is to make ourselves what God expects for us to be. Many folks want to focus on **Matthew 7:1**, but we can't forget that **verses 2-5** follow right after it.

IX. Focus on finding truth, not validating your opinions.

- A. Jesus said that it is the truth that will set us free **(John 8:32)** and not our opinions. When we approach the Bible, we must look to it as a source of truth and not self validation. We need to check our beliefs and opinions at the door to Bible reading, and simply seek out God's truth.
- B. It is certainly not impossible for someone to misuse the Scriptures. Peter said that there would be some people who would do that. That ought not be us. We must desire truth and truth alone. **(II Peter 3:16)**

X. Remember that the goal of Bible reading is for God to be glorified.

- A. When we read, we are reading to honor God through our efforts and growth. We are not reading to simply better ourselves for our won sake, but we do so for the sake of God, His Kingdom, and those around us. **(II Tim. 3:16,17)**
- B. When God sees this type of humble attitude within us, He certainly will bless us as we read about Him and His will for us in this life. We will truly become complete through the power of God.

It must be recognized that Bible reading is so important to the spiritual vitality of the disciple of Christ. We must give much effort to reading our Bibles and growing in our faith, understanding, and knowledge of God's will for us. God has given us the tools and the means, we just simply have to put in the desire and effort. May God be glorified and honored as we continually read and come to know God and His will for us.