



## *How To Read God's Word*

*I will meditate on Your precepts  
And regard Your ways.  
I shall delight in Your statutes;  
I shall not forget Your word.  
Psalm 119:15-16*

*Probably within minutes of your decision to accept Christ as your personal Savior, someone explained that as a Christian you needed to now do three things: Pray, go to church, and read the Bible. This is not bad advice, but actually falls a little short of what is truly needed in order to grow in one's personal walk. The truth is that "reading" the Bible is never enough. In fact, the Bible itself never advocates that anyone simply "read" it; we're supposed to put it into practice. And the word the Scripture most often uses to explain how to approach God's Word is "meditate", something that goes simply beyond mere "reading". In other words, we're supposed to intensely study God's Word pursuing the goal of how to apply it to our own behavior.*

Meditating is not staring at the words on the page with some sort of force of will that invokes secret meanings to leap out at us, but prayerfully seeking the Holy Spirit's insight exposing what we need to do on our part to put the Word into practice. One of the things I've learned running a website dedicated to encouraging the personal application of God's Word is that many Christians really don't fully

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comprehend this. And it's usually betrayed when they express how difficult it is for them to "read" the Bible regularly. Where do I start? What's the most important books? Can I do this on my own without a commentary?

Well, the two-fold short answer is that **ALL** of Scripture is important (don't ever let anyone tell you the New Testament is more important than the Old), and you can't accomplish the purposes of God's Word by reading it – you're going to have to put some effort into it, both in terms of prayer and study. And you're going to have to recognize that when you begin to delve more deeply into His Word that what you're going to be confronted with is the very voice of God convicting your heart, mind, and soul whenever even the seemingly smallest of things is out of alignment with His Word and ways. In other words, the proof that your Bible reading approach is working properly is the degree to which your own behavior begins to change. Just getting smarter won't cut it. If you are not becoming a more loving person, if the quality of your personal relationships aren't changing, if you are not becoming conformed to the image of Christ in your very behavior, I'm sorry to inform you that your Bible study approach is failing you.

So if you're the kind of Christian who has elevated their involvement in God's Word from merely reading it to truly consuming it for the purpose of being transformed by it, the question still lingers as to what is the most important parts of the Bible to focus on. Yes, we eventually want to get to everything, but realistically time is limited.

It seems the New Testament always gets priority because, obviously, it contains Christ's teaching. But never forget that Christ **IS** the Word. In other words, He **IS** both the Old and New Testaments. He may have revealed different things at different times, but it's all Him nonetheless. We can't say, "Oh, those are just history books" or "Those are just prophesy books" and write them off as less relevant; they're **ALL** Christ Himself. And having taught through every book of the Bible many times now in concert with the Walk with the Word

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reading plan, I can most assuredly testify that the Spirit speaks to and reaches us just as effectively through Lamentations as through the Gospel of John. It **ALL** points to Christ and it **ALL** convicts us to ease our grip on whatever we're still clinging to from the old life.

With that in mind, I would like to offer a Bible study suggestion to this particular audience, since it's been my experience that the average visitor to Walk with the Word appear to be far above average when it comes to Bible study. This is just a personal observation of what I have found to be almost universally lacking in the Bible reading habits of more mature believers. In a nutshell, I find it fascinating that there is an almost universal reaction to ignore the writings of Solomon, that Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are most often the least studied, least read books of the Bible even by many mature believers.

Now I know that chronological Bibles order the reading according to history's timeline, but what if instead we lined them up by which ones God published first? Have you ever thought about this?

First, we'd have to start with nothing. Yes, God spoke to many such as Adam and Noah, but He never told them to formally preserve anything in writing. It was to be transmitted person to person. I think this in itself is a teaching that God's original design is that all things work by faith.

The very first **book** in such a Bible would actually be Job. This teaching originated from Abraham's time and was preserved and passed down orally for many centuries before being published on paper. But long before Moses penned the Pentateuch, Job was the first canonical work available. This is quite illuminating when you consider that all the Israelites knew of God from the standpoint of His Word were the oral traditions passed down and Job, a book that can be summarized as teaching, "I am God, and you are not." The first revelation of God's Word is a teaching about His sovereignty affirming the need to live by faith.

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Of course we would then arrive at the Pentateuch, which fills in a lot of gaps as far as all the years since creation, but it's interesting to note that these five books are most often characterized by the label "The Law".

Now if our chronological Bible is ordering the books according to when they were published, we need to understand that the very next book to appear after "The Law" would probably be Psalms followed by Solomon's Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. The content of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and 1 & 2 Samuel were most certainly known, but there's a lot of evidence that they weren't actually published as we now have them until later. They, along with the history books, would come **AFTER** Solomon's writings. And then, of course, we would order the books of each of the prophets as they came about to finish out the Old Testament.

So consider this overall sequence: God doesn't publish His Word at first, instead preferring that it be passed from person to person by faith. When He first speaks to address the growing unfaithfulness to what He *has* spoken, He provides Job. After many more centuries and man's continued unfaithfulness, God provides "The Law". And what does He do when He sees that His Law is not being properly kept? He first provides Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon, all books which are essentially commentaries explaining the true application of "The Law". **THEN** when further unfaithfulness persists – and only then – does He introduce His prophets to warn and convict of the consequences of continued unfaithfulness leading to judgment. It's a very interesting sequence of events, isn't it?

If you truly want to understand how to apply "The Law", what the true intentions of God's Word are, there is a wealth of answers in those four books, particularly Solomon's. There are many Psalms which illuminate not only "The Law" but the historical events that came before as well as providing personal examples of applying God's Word.

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Proverbs establishes the internal struggle between personal faithfulness and spiritual seduction; Ecclesiastes is the practical life application of God's Word in everyday living; Song of Solomon reveals in dramatic detail that the author of "The Law" is actually motivated from the most intense desire of love. They all combine to provide what God was stating, at that time in history, as the proper application of His Word to the believer's life.

My encouragement to you is to take the plunge. Read them through **WITHOUT** any commentaries or outside opinions. Just read them through for yourself. It is startling to hear all that God is speaking to us through these books when we stop merely "reading" them and take them seriously as equal with the rest of His Word. Since we have largely ignored them and in many cases given up, believing they're too hard to understand, it's a bit humbling to be confronted with the rich treasures this portion of Scripture affords.

I truly believe that one of the marks of a mature faith and deepening knowledge of His Word is revealed in those who seriously undertake to hear what God originally spoke to explain how His Law was supposed to be put into practice.

In His Love,

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