

Reading the Bible From Cover to Cover

by Abraham Smith

We should read the Bible from cover to cover. We should want to know what the Lord said. Many of us, while acknowledging that the Bible is the word of God, have not read it in its entirety. We have been hindered from reading the Bible completely for several reasons. It is my hope and prayer that we would all be rid of all obstacles to the hearing and reading of God's word.

We must realize that the Lord expects us to read all the Bible. The Lord said on one occasion, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4). Not "live by some words," but by "every word" of God. Thus we need to read "every word" of God. We need to be like the Bereans who "received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

These Scriptures should dispel the idea that we need only read some of the Scriptures. This notion would cause us to be judges of what in the Bible is important. But "Every word of God is pure" (Prov. 30:5).

Then, we may make ourselves a promise to read all the Bible, but it does not get done. But other things are getting done. Television shows are watched, other books and magazines are read, and our time is spent on other things. If this happens, then we simply have not made the precious words of our Creator a priority. Whatever is most important should be done first.

But isn't understanding the Bible important? But can you understand what you have not read? Paul, commenting on what he wrote, said, "By which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:3-4). If we are not careful, we may get the idea that our understanding comes from something or someone else apart from our reading God's word, which would be contrary to what the Bible says. In order to enter the house of understanding, we must go through the door of reading or hearing the word for ourselves. Thus, Timothy was told to "give attention to reading" (1 Tim. 4:13).

When Jesus was confronted with a question, he showed where we should seek answers for spiritual inquiry. "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" (Luke 10:25-26).

Let us also notice that Jesus did not refer the questioner to his own dreams for an answer (see Jer. 23:28). Jesus did not suggest the man's own opinions as a source for the answer to his question. Proverbs 3:5-6 teaches us to trust the Lord, which is to trust what he says in his word. In this way our steps are guided as we follow God's word. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:104).

To this question, Jesus did not appeal to other non-biblical religious writings. Let other books be read, but do not use them as a substitute for the reading of the Bible. And never believe that the reading of the Bible is incomplete without these other books.

There may be many of us who agree that all the Bible should be regularly read. We might say, "I read the Bible every day, but I simply have not read it all." If I believe that I can seriously read the Bible for several years and not complete it, I have one or both of two problems. Either I am reading the same passages of Scriptures, thus not adding to my "faith virtue, to virtue knowledge" (2 Pet. 1:5) or I am not reading as much as I think I am!

There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible. If I read four chapters of the Bible every day starting January 1, I would have read the entire Bible by October 26. If I can read the whole Bible in as short a time as a year by reading as few Scriptures as four chapters a day, it should become clear that within ten or fifteen years I ought to have read all of the Bible, God's holy Word.

Any of us who go a lifetime without reading all of the Bible while believing we are working toward that goal are not spending as much time in God's word as we have made ourselves believe.

I am not contending that we read the whole Bible only one time. Rather, we must make the reading of the whole Bible a regular part of our lives. If we do not read the entire Bible for ourselves, then we have only the opinions of others and they are doing our thinking for us.

Let's make our attitude be that of David writing in Psalm 119. "Therefore I love Your commandments More than gold, yes, than fine gold!" (v. 127). "How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (v. 103). "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (v. 97). If we truly are "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matt. 5:6), then we will read the Bible from cover to cover! "Blessed is he who reads" (Rev. 1:3).