



Reading and Searching the Scriptures

1. Follow a regular plan in reading the Scriptures, so that you may become acquainted with the entire Bible; and make this reading a part of your private devotions. Do not always confine yourselves only to read according to your set plan, so as never to read by choice, however, having a plan leads to the most edification. Some parts of the Bible are more difficult, some may seem very dry for an ordinary reader; but if you would look on all of it as being the very Words of God, never to be disregarded, but read with faith and reverence, then without a doubt you will find great gain.
2. Be sure to mark those passages you read, the ones which you find most fitting to your situation, condition, or temptations; or those that you have found which touches your heart more than other passages. It will be most profitable for you to often review these marked passages.
3. Compare one Scripture with another, the more obscure verses with those which are more clear. This is an excellent means to find out the sense of the Scriptures; and this is the best use of the notes found in the margins of most Bibles. And always keep Christ in view, for He is revealed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament (in its genealogies, types, and sacrifices), as well as in the passages of the New Testament
4. Read the Bible with a holy attention, always remembering the majesty of God, and the reverence that is due Him. This must be done with attention, first, to the words; second, to the sense; and, third, to the divine authority of the Scripture, and the obligation it lays on the conscience for obedience. The Apostle Paul said, *"We thank God continually because, when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe."* (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
5. Let your main purpose in reading the Scriptures be for application to your life, and not just to gain knowledge, James said, *"Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* (James 1:22) Read the Bible that you may learn and do, without any limitation. Whatever you see that God requires, you must study to put into practice.
6. Beg God and ask Him for the help of His Holy Spirit. For it is the Holy Spirit that inspired the Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who will give us the understanding of it. Paul said, *"Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit which is in him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."* (1 Corinthians 2:11) Therefore before you read the Bible, it is very important that you ask for a blessing on what you are about to read.
7. Beware of a worldly, fleshly mind: for fleshly sins blind the mind from the things of God. In an eclipse of the moon, the earth comes between the sun and the moon, and so keeps the light of the sun from it. In the same way, the world in the heart, comes between you and the light of the Word, keeping its divine light from you.
8. Labor to be disciplined toward godliness, and to perceive your spiritual circumstances. For a disciplined attitude greatly helps us to understand the Bible. Such a Christian will find his circumstances in the Word, and the Word will give light to his circumstances, and his circumstances will give light into the Word.
9. Whatever you learn from the Word, labor to put it into practice. For to him that has, more will be given. Those people who make no effort to put into practice, what they already know about God's Word, will get very little insight into the Bible. But while the stream runs through a holy life, the fountain will always be more refreshing.

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

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