

**Winter Convocation 2019**  
**The Practice of Being in the Word**

**Reading the Word**

***“All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17***

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, mans' salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word. From the Confession of Faith – Holy Scripture – Chapter 1, section IV

“Through Bible reading we have the opportunity to learn directly from the Master Teacher, the Holy Spirit. As helpful and profitable as it is to learn from the teaching of others, there is an unmatched joy in having the Holy Spirit speak to us directly from the pages of His Word...Bible reading enables us...to enjoy communion with God as He speaks to us from His Word, encouraging us, instructing us and revealing himself to us. (Bridges, The Practice of Holiness, p. 31)

“Bible reading provides the opportunity to gain an overall perspective of the entire Bible...as we read through the Bible, the various pieces of spiritual truth begin to fit together. The book of Hebrews doesn't make sense unless one is at least knowledgeable of the Old Testament priesthood and sacrificial system” (Bridges, p.31)

“Without a reading program of the entire Bible, we would be not only spiritually ignorant but also spiritually impoverished. Who can fail to learn from Abraham's faith, David's love for God, Daniel's righteousness and Job's trial? How can we become godly without the heartbeat of the Psalms and the practical wisdom of the Proverbs? Where better can we learn of both the majesty and the faithfulness of God than from the prophet Isaiah?” (Bridges, p.32)

“All scripture is profitable for us, even passages that seem so difficult to understand”

***“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2:14***

“The knowledge of divine things to which Christians are called is more than a formal acquaintance with biblical words and Christian idea. It is a realizing of the reality and relevance of those activities of the triune God to which Scripture testifies. (J.I. Packer, Concise Theology, p. 154)

“The work of the Spirit in imparting this knowledge is called “illumination,” or enlightening. It is not a giving of new revelation, but a work within us that enables us to grasp and to love the revelation that is there before us in the biblical text as heard and read, and as explained by teachers and writers...Illumination is thus the applying of God's revealed truth to our hearts, so that we grasp as reality for ourselves what the sacred text sets forth” (Packer, p. 155)

“The way to benefit fully from the Spirit's ministry of illumination is by serious Bible study, serious prayer, and serious response in obedience to whatever truths one has been shown already. This corresponds to Luther's dictum that three things make a theologian: *oratio* (prayer), *meditatio* (thinking in God's presence about the text), and *tentatio* (trial, the struggle for biblical fidelity in the face of pressure to disregard what Scripture says) (Packer, p. 156)

## When You Open Your Bible, Labor to Listen

Excerpted from article by Summer Lacy on [gospelcoalition.org](http://gospelcoalition.org)

God speaks through the Scriptures. Knowing his Word is a necessary component to hearing his voice. As you read, here are five ways to posture and position yourself to better hear God's voice.

**1. Read with Humility** -Humility opens our ears to hear God speak. As we read his Word, we humble ourselves in submission under his authority. We allow it to shape us, not demanding it change to fit cultural norms or our own perceived needs and desires. We approach God's Word with plenty of room to ask questions and seek understanding. As we do, though, we must not be arrogant, critical, or casual. We must acknowledge our own need to "receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

**2. Read with Diligence** -Each of us is capable of reading and understanding Scripture, but it requires considerable effort. We learn to hear God's voice as we gain insight into his will through consistent and careful examination of his Word. The learning curve is steep, but there's a cumulative effect to the study of God's Word. So keep at it. Patiently persist. Don't "grow weary of doing good," because "in due season we will reap" (Gal. 6:9). The more you read and study, the more you will understand and hopefully love.

**3. Read with Expectation** - When we read the Bible, our first assumption must be that it speaks. More pointedly, we must assume God speaks to us exactly where we are. Through the determined study of his Word, expect God to teach, comfort, confront, strengthen, and transform you.

"Without faith it is impossible to please him," the author of Hebrews writes, "for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Heb. 11:6). We faithfully read God's Word when we expect him to speak.

**4. Read to Listen**- You can't hear if you don't listen. Listening is required in the formation and maintenance of every human relationship. It's equally important in forming and maintaining our relationship with God. When he created us as relational beings, he opened communication between us and himself as a mutual endeavor.

Like any worthy pursuit, listening to God requires time, intentionality, and purpose. We must tune our ears to hear his voice in the pages of his Word (Mark 4:9).

**5. Read with Prayer** - Hearing God speak is a spiritual endeavor. Any difficulty we have in hearing God's voice, then, is much more a spiritual matter than an intellectual one. As we open our Bibles, we should pray over our time and efforts, knowing we can only hear by him by his grace and mercy.

Like the Ephesian Christians, we need the help of the Holy Spirit: "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. 1:16–17).

In the Bible, God makes himself known, presently speaking to each of us. Open his Word with humility and diligence, eagerly listening to his voice. Pray for a willing, pliable, attentive heart—and then expect to hear him speak.

## **Bible Reading Plans compiled on [ligonier.com](http://ligonier.com)**

**5 Day Bible Reading Program** - Read through the Bible in a year, with readings five days a week. Duration: One Year

**52 Week Bible Reading Plan** - Read through the Bible in a year, with each day of the week dedicated to a different genre: Epistles, The Law, History, Psalms, Poetry, Prophecy, and Gospels. Duration: One year

**5x5x5 Bible Reading Plan** - Read through the New Testament in a year, reading Monday to Friday. Weekends are set aside for reflection and other reading. Especially beneficial if you're new to a daily discipline of Bible reading. Duration: One year

**A Bible Reading Chart**- Read through the Bible at your own pace. Use this minimalistic, yet beautifully designed, chart to track your reading throughout the year. Duration: Flexible

**Chronological Bible Reading Plan** -Read through the Bible in the order the events occurred chronologically. Duration: One year

**The Discipleship Journal Bible Reading Plan** - Four daily readings beginning in Genesis, Psalms, Matthew and Acts. Duration: One year

**ESV Daily Bible Reading Plan**- Four daily readings taken from four lists: Psalms and Wisdom Literature, Pentateuch and History of Israel, Chronicles and Prophets, and Gospels and Epistles. Duration: One year

**Every Word in the Bible** -Read through the Bible one chapter at a time. Readings alternate between the Old and New Testaments. Duration: Three years

**Historical Bible Reading Plan** -The Old Testament readings are similar to Israel's Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament readings are an attempt to follow the order in which the books were authored. Duration: One year

**Professor Grant Horner's Bible Reading System**- Reading ten chapters a day, in the course of a year you'll read the Gospels four times, the Pentateuch twice, Paul's letters four to five times, the Old Testament wisdom literature six times, the Psalms at least twice, Proverbs and Acts a dozen times, and the OT History and Prophetic books about one and a half times. Duration: Ongoing

**Robert Murray M'Cheyne Bible Reading Plan** - Read the New Testament and Psalms twice and the Old Testament once. Duration: One or two years

**Straight Through the Bible Reading Plan** - Read straight through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Duration: One year

**Tabletalk Bible Reading Plan** - Two readings each day; one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. Duration: One year

**The Legacy Reading Plan** - This plan does not have set readings for each day. Instead, it has set books for each month, and set number of Proverbs and Psalms to read each week. It aims to give you more flexibility, while grounding you in specific books of the Bible each month. Duration: One year

**Two-Year Bible Reading Plan** - Read the Old and New Testaments once, and Psalms & Proverbs four times. Duration: Two years