

Bible Intake, Part 1

NOW THAT WE VE DEFINED a few terms and looked at the characteristics of disciples, we re ready to move on to a study of the disciplines of the Christian life.

First, here is a little review.

Theme Text:

1 Timothy 4:7-8 But refuse profane and old wives fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

The purpose of discipline is godliness. We participate in these disciplines, even though they are often inconvenient, time consuming, and unpopular, because they help us grow spiritually.

Key Terms:

A *disciple* is a follower, a learner, anyone who believes and practices the doctrines of his teacher.

Discipline implies instruction and correction, the training that improves, molds, strengthens, and perfects character.

A *discipline* refers to a practice or habit that strengthens or sets apart a disciple.

Discipleship suggests the active pursuit of those things that makes one a good disciple.

The first discipline we ll study is Bible intake. “No spiritual discipline is more important than the intake of God s Word. Nothing can substitute for it. . . . If we would know God and be godly, we must know the Word of



God intimately. ² Growth and sanctification are directly linked to one's access to the Bible. Little intake leads to little maturity or strength.

We enjoy something that the early church and other believers for many centuries did not have easy access to the Word of God. Most of us have several Bibles, perhaps even different translations. We should appreciate and make use of such freedom.

The purpose or goal of all methods of Bible intake is obedience to what God says and the development of Christlikeness. As Jesus said, those who hear the Word and don't obey it are like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

Aspects of Bible intake

Hearing God's Word

Texts:

Luke 11:28 Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

1 Timothy 4:13 Till I come, give attendance to [public] reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Why is hearing God's Word a discipline? Because we have to take steps/make plans to do it. It's not automatic.

What are some opportunities we have to hear God's Word? 1. Listen to preaching at church and Sunday school; 2. Listen to sermon or Bible tapes; 3. Listen to media (TV, radio). Be very careful here—lots of false doctrine floating over the air waves.

One of the primary opportunities Christians have to hear the Word of God on a regular basis is at their church. Because the regular preaching of God's Word is so important in the believer's life, it is critical that one attends a church where the Word is pro-



**Some Tips To Help
You Listen To A
Sermon:**

1. Take notes. Try to follow the outline. If the outline is printed, take notes in the margins. Try to compose your own outline as you listen and then compare it to the published one.
2. Get plenty of rest the night before. It's easy to nod off during a long sermon. Make sure you aren't sleepy when you go to church. Drink some coffee or pop if you need to.
3. Turn to the passages the preacher mentions. Follow along in your Bible.
4. Sit toward the front of the auditorium. This prevents distractions. Sit with people who won't distract you. Don't distract others.
5. Pray before going to church that you might be alert and obedient to what you hear.
6. Prepare early so you are not rushed on Sundays. Arrive at church early and prepare yourself to listen.

claimed fully, systematically, and accurately. Many churches, especially fundamental ones, hear little more than one evangelistic sermon after another. Or they may get many sermons on the pastor's favorite subjects. Many churchgoers get a steady diet of political opinion, book reviews, rules and regulations, denunciations of various unbiblical movements, and the like. But what believers need for growth and education is verse-by-verse exposition of Scripture.

Listening is something of a lost art, at least in America. We are used to ten-second sound bites, not thirty-minute dissertations. So we must train ourselves to focus in on what the preacher is saying. Don't just sit in the pew like a bump on a log. Try to soak up and digest the sermon. Discipline yourself to listen attentively in order to get the most out of the sermon.

Reading God's Word

Some statistics (among those claiming to be "born again" Christians):

- 18% read the Bible daily.
- 23% say they never read the Bible.
- An average reader could read through the entire Bible in about 70 hours.

Texts:

Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Bible reading is the most influential factor in shaping a person's moral and social behavior. If you want to be changed, if you desire Christlikeness, you must



read your Bible. Having the Bible in your language and dialect is a great privilege and blessing which many people do not enjoy. You should consider daily Bible reading a privilege and a pleasure much more than a duty.

Bible Study

Bible study differs from Bible reading. Both are valuable and necessary. Bible study implies intense analysis and research of the text. The goal of all Bible study is to accurately discern what the text means and how one can apply it to his or her life. Sometimes the meaning of a passage is clear; at other times, the meaning will surface only after intense investigation. This careful, systematic investigative process is called exegesis. One exegetes Scripture to find out the original intent of the author's words. It is only after finding out what the text meant that one can determine what the text means.

Texts:

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

How do you study out a passage?

- Try to define all significant words in the passage.
- Research the background of the book. Find out who the author was, who the original readers were, and what the problems or issues the book addresses are.
- Trace the author's argument. Find out what point the author was trying to make in the text

Suggestions for Consistent Success in Bible Reading:

1. Arrange a time and a place. Work it into your daily schedule. Find a quiet place away from distractions. Do it the same time and place daily. Make it a habit. It is usually best not to read before bed.
2. Follow a plan. Don't just open the book randomly and read. Many different plans are available that make Bible reading a pleasure.
3. Look for application as you read. Note verses and principles to live by.
4. Use only King James Version of the Bible.
5. DISCIPLINE YOURSELF! Don't give yourself any excuses for not reading daily. Do whatever it takes to carve out some time to read the Bible.



you are studying. See if the author addresses the same issue in another part of the Bible.

- Write down questions or observations about the text.
- Consult an expert. Bible scholars have spent years studying your passage, and likely can explain the meaning of the text. Most of this research is found in books.

Tools for exegesis: Bible dictionary handbook, commentaries, and concordance. Many Bible study tools are currently available in books, magazines, journals, and computer software.³

The ability to participate in Bible study is largely based on having the tools, the books (or software) that will help you. Determine to buy good Bible study tools as you are able.

Bible study is an important discipline to participate in. Those who are able to exegete the Bible for themselves are able to be “self-feeders,” that is, they can understand and apply the Bible on their own without depending upon others to teach them. They also may avoid following a teacher into error. The best teachers are those who can exegete the text.

Review

Bible intake consists of:

1. Hearing the Bible discipline yourself to hear the Word of God preached whenever you have an opportunity.
2. Reading the Bible discipline yourself to reading the Bible on a daily basis.
3. Studying the Bible discipline yourself to exegete the Bible. Acquire the necessary tools for Bible study.



Conclusion

There is no excuse for not partaking of the Bible every day. Good translations are available, as is good preaching and profitable Bible study tools. Commit yourself to hearing, reading, and studying the Bible.

For Further Discussion

1. What can a pastor or professor offer that the average layman cannot?

Most pastors and teachers have more education and background in Bible study and interpretation than layman do. They probably know the original languages and can spend much more time in analysis of the text than others can. Thus, they should be able to understand and communicate the meaning and application of a text better than the average layman. It is their profession, what they've been trained to do.

2. Some suggest that if one can read and study the Bible for himself, he doesn't need to attend church. Do you agree?

No. We are commanded to participate in church no matter what the level of our understanding. Those who excel at Bible knowledge should teach. Further, church is more than just hearing from the Bible. Worship and fellowship are equally as important.

3. Some suggest that it's only the experts or the church authorities who can accurately explain and interpret the Bible. Do you agree?

No. We believe that the Bible is accessible and understandable to the average believer. Expertise and education is certainly beneficial, but average believers can understand a great deal of the text.

