**Getting the Most out of the Bible**

**Spiritual Leadership Conference 2013**

**Introduction**

At times, it is easy for a Christian to stare at his Bible and wonder to himself, “How am I supposed to understand that?” “Where do I start?” “How can I get the most out of reading the Bible?” You have come to the conclusion that you want to do more than simply check off a reading plan. You want to read the Word of God and meet with the God of the Word! How can this happen?

Thomas Watson, Puritan preacher who lived 1620-1686, was once asked this very question. His reply was fairly thorough:

* Remove all hindrances, including the love of every sin, the distracting concerns of the world, etc
* Prepare your heart
* Read it with reverence
* Read it in order
* Get a true understanding of Scripture by comparing its parts
* Read with seriousness
* Persevere in remembering what you read
* Meditate upon it
* Read it humbly
* Believe it is God’s word
* Prize it highly
* Love it ardently
* Come to it with an honest heart
* Pay attention to commands and promises
* Don’t stop reading until your heart is warmed
* Practice what you read

His list was fairly thorough. Not much has really changed in the nearly 400 years since he made these observations. However, to make it, perhaps, a little more relevant and easy for our 21st century mind to grasp – these observations have been distilled into five principles.

1. **Read it faithfully**
   1. Which is better:
      1. To read the Bible for one hour a day, two days a week, *or*
      2. To read the Bible for 10 minutes a day every day?
   2. Why did you choose your answer?
   3. We do not want to snack every 3 or 4 days from the Scriptures; we want to live there
   4. I cannot understand it if I do not read it…
2. **Read it prayerfully**
   1. Do you ever notice that it is easy to sit down and read the Bible, but never actually pray for His help to understand what we are reading?
   2. I think this stems from the mindset, “I need to check off my Bible reading for the day…”
   3. Since the work of inspiration belongs to the Spirit, why do we forget that the work of illumination belongs to Him as well?
   4. Psa 119:18 *– “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”*
3. **Read it actively**
   1. If our minds are not engaged, we will not retain what we are reading
   2. Our minds really believe that they can multi-task…and minds attempt to do just that when the Word of God is opened
   3. How can we get actively involved in the text?
      1. Keep a journal, summarizing what you have read
      2. Ask questions of the text – why, where, when, how, etc
      3. Imagine that you are part of the story
4. **Read it aggressively**
   1. There will come a day when three or four verses a day will not suffice…
   2. The day will come when a “Proverb a Day” is not enough
   3. The day will come when simply reading your Bible through in a year is still lacking
   4. Consider some options to vary up your reading program:
      1. Read through the Bible chronologically
      2. Read through the Bible multiple times a year (1189 chapters)
         1. If you read 3.25 chapters a day, you read through your Bible once a year
         2. If you read 6.5 chapters a day, you read through the Bible twice a year
         3. If you read 9.77 chapters a day, you read through it three times a year
         4. If you read 13.03 chapters a day, you read through it four times a year
         5. If you read 16.28 chapters a day, you read through it five times a year
      3. That’s impossible! No one can read that much of the Bible in one setting!
         1. Why does it have to be one setting?
         2. Why can we not read in the morning to start our day, read during our lunch break to reorient our day toward Him, and then read at night finishing our day with Him?
      4. Imagine reading through the Bible multiple times a year, for multiple years – would not the stories, the main ideas of each book, and the different characters become more familiar to you?
5. **Read it jointly**
   1. The Christian life is not a solo journey…we are built together for community
   2. Why not share your Bible reading plan with a friend
      1. You could discuss it once a week or more
      2. This would build accountability into the reading
      3. This would provide insight from another set of eyes on the same text