

## Elements of Productive Bible Study: Read

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:15

Code: B120926

By now, we can agree that God's Word is the foundation of our spiritual growth. But how do the words on the pages of Scripture translate into greater godliness and deeper sanctification in the lives of God's people?

To help you get the most from God's Word, I want to highlight some key elements of productive Bible study. The first one is simple—we have to *read* it.

It's a very basic instruction, but it's one that's often overlooked in the pursuit of quick and easy spiritual development. You can't grow from Scripture if you don't know it, and you won't know it if you don't read it.

The question then becomes, "How should I read it?" There are all sorts of helpful Bible-reading schedules and plans—there's even a version of the study Bible called *The MacArthur Daily Bible* that's designed to be read over the course of a year. Pick a plan and stick with it—the method doesn't matter nearly as much as the motivation.

And your motivation matters a great deal. If you're simply reading your Bible to say you've read it—to fulfill a requirement rather than glean and grow from God's eternal truth—you can't expect to see fruit of your study in your life. Speed-reading and thorough biblical understanding do not go hand in hand, and there are no corners to cut when it comes to studying Scripture. If you want to know it, you have to read it carefully, intently, and faithfully.

The pattern that has worked best for me over the years is repetition. Not the kind of shallow, mindless repetition recommended in various spiritual formation methods. I'm not talking about disengaging your mind and waiting for a mystical word from the Lord. Cherry-picking disjointed words and phrases from the Bible is a recipe for confusion, frustration, and theological error. Instead, we need to dig deeply to understand the context and content of God's truth.

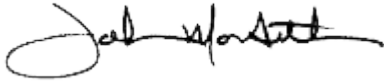
I'll take a New Testament book or a large section from a book and read it over and over, day after day. Sometimes I'll read it for thirty days—sometimes much longer. The point is to saturate my mind with the text. I want to know it from every angle, to be able to explain its major themes, and to understand what the author had to say to his original audience, and the implications his teaching has for my life.

The whole point of reading is to understand what the Bible says. And it's helpful for more than just the passage immediately in front of you. As your knowledge of Scripture increases, you'll start to see how one passage informs and explains other passages. You'll start to see the connections between the biblical authors, how the Old and New Testaments work together in harmony, and how the Bible is the best resource for explaining the Bible.

It's hard to understand that if you're handcuffed to a concordance, or you only ever hunt and peck through God's Word, looking for nuggets of truth that "speak to you."

Faithfully reading Scripture deepens your understanding, trains you to think biblically, and stimulates your spiritual growth. Don't let a lack of discipline or a short attention span be an excuse to miss out on those blessings.

(And if you don't already have a Scripture-reading plan, you can follow our daily devotionals online [here](#).)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

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