

3. WE MUST READ IT TO BE FILLED

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).

It is very important to observe the parallels between Ephesians and Colossians: they shed much light on each other. In Ephesians 5:18 we have the command, “Be ye filled with the Spirit”, and a glance at the following verses makes it clear that Paul is speaking of the same thing as in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”. This means that the Spirit fills us to the degree that our lives are saturated with the Word and are under its power and authority. At the same time, the more the Spirit fills us so much the more will we love and obey the Word. You cannot have one without the other. This is not an option, it is a commandment and a necessity. If we are not filled with the word of Christ and the Spirit of God, there is a vacuum within us which will soon draw in the things of this present evil world.

It is not just a question of reading and memorising the word, although that is essential. But as every part of our lives is brought into subjection to God’s word, the Spirit of God gladly fills us with Himself in life and holiness. The result of this seen in all our relationships: to the Lord – we praise Him with grace in our hearts; in love and care to our spouses and families; and in right attitudes to those with whom and for whom we work. It will be seen especially in our relationships with those with whom we are

united in Christian fellowship (See Ephesians 5:18-6:9 and Colossians 3:16-4:1).

May we know more and more the blessedness of those who meditate in God's word day and night, walking every step of the pilgrim pathway under the illumination of its sanctifying light (Psalm 1:1,2; 119:105).

A FEW HINTS:

Pray: Always ask God for His help and blessing in the reading.

Plan: *Time* – The Word of God deserves priority. It is best to fix a time each day for Bible reading. You can also take advantage of any other opportunities during the day.

Quantity – The size of chapters and verses in the Bible is very variable. Perhaps it is best to determine a minimum number of pages.

Scheme – To understand the continuity of the Bible it is best to read consecutively from beginning to end. However, if you prefer to give more emphasis to the New Testament, you could alternate between the New and Old Testaments, reading a whole book from each in turn – Matthew, Genesis, Mark, Exodus, etc. Doing this, after reading the NT 13 times and the OT 9 times the two Testaments will end together. Another idea is to divide the Scriptures into 5 more or less equal sections, perhaps Genesis to Ruth, 1Samuel to Job, Psalms to Song, Isaiah to Malachi and the NT, reading a certain number of pages or chapters from each section day by day.

Persevere: “Give attention to reading!” (Timothy 4:13).

Why Read the Bible?

The Source of Truth and Food for our Souls

Old Testament (OT): GENESIS EXODUS LEVITICUS NUMBERS DEUTERONOMY JOSHUA JUDGES RUTH 1SAMUEL 2SAMUEL 1KINGS 2KINGS 1CHRONICLES 2CHRONICLES EZRA NEHEMIAH ESTHER JOB PSALMS PROVERBS ECCLESIASTES SONG OF SOLOMON ISAIAH JEREMIAH LAMENTATIONS EZEKIEL DANIEL HOSEA JOEL AMOS OBADIAH JONAH MICAH NAHUM HABAKKUK ZEPHANIAH HAGGAI ZECHARIAH MALACHI

New Testament (NT): MATTHEW MARK LUKE JOHN ACTS ROMANS 1CORINTHIANS 2CORINTHIANS GALATIANS EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS COLOSSIANS 1THESSALONIANS 2THESSALONIANS 1TIMOTHY 2TIMOTHY TITUS PHILEMON HEBREWS JAMES 1PETER 2PETER 1JOHN 2JOHN 3JOHN JUDE REVELATION

To answer the above question, it should be enough to say: “In order to learn what God our Creator wants us to know and do”. And If we belong to Christ who Who first loved us, we will surely desire to know everything He has been pleased to reveal in His inspired Word.

A young woman’s husband was away working in

a distant town. She was asked why she read his letters so many times: didn't she understand them the first time? She answered that it was nothing to do with understanding, she just delighted to read the words of the one she loved.

We can all make excuses – too busy, too tired, but it is really a question of how much we appreciate the Author of the Book, and how much we appreciate what He has done for us. If we are saved, and realised how much we have been forgiven, surely we would love Him much (see Luke 7:47), and it would be our joy to read His words. Moreover, what an encouragement it is that the Lord Jesus recognises as members of His own spiritual family all those who “hear the word of God, and do it” (Luke 8:21).

Others object that the Bible is too difficult. Certainly, some parts of the Bible need patience and perseverance, so we should pray for patience to read on in God's word. If we do not get anything else from our Scripture reading except the development of patience, we have already received a great benefit! Of course, some parts are hard to understand – after all, it is not the word of finite men, it is the word of the eternal God. But we can pray for wisdom as we read: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). Truly the answer to every objection is: Just persevere in the reading of God's word in a spirit of prayer. As we read His word He teaches us how to pray and what to pray for, and as we pray we understand more and more of His word.

Here then are three scriptural reasons why we should read the Bible:

1. WE MUST READ IT TO BE FED

“Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deuteronomy 8:3).

We need the Word of God in order to Grow.

Peter is not speaking only of the recently saved, but of all believers when he writes: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1Peter 2:2). No desire may indicate that we are not yet “born again”. Healthy newborn babes have a strong appetite for their mother's milk and will cry and scream until they get it. God wants us to continue to have such an appetite for His word all through our lives, so that we may “grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15). Proverbs 2:2-5 says, “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; ... then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.”

We need all the Word of God in order to Grow Properly.

Notice that Deuteronomy 8:3 says “every word”. It is not for us to pick and choose, or decide that some parts of God's word are not important. He has given us every word. “Every word of God is pure” (Proverbs 30:5). Not all of the Bible is about us, but it is all for us. Just as a balanced and varied diet is necessary for a healthy body, so the whole Bible is needful for our spiritual health. The only way to avoid being extreme or unbalanced in doctrine or practice is to be acquainted with the whole of God's revelation.

We need the Word of God in order to Grow Strong.

The Lord Jesus quoted three texts from

Deuteronomy in order to defeat the tempter in the wilderness. Chapter 8, verse 6, was the first one He quoted. In the context God is speaking about the trials of Israel in their wilderness journey and of God's provision for them all the way to the Promised Land. Therefore, it suited the Lord's circumstances perfectly when He was being tempted in the wilderness. The Lord used the very same resources that we have. He did not use His almighty power to defeat Satan, He just quoted the words of the Lord. If we treasure up the inspired word in our hearts, we will be strengthened and armed to face every trial and every temptation. “Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1John 2:14).

2. WE MUST READ IT TO BE FITTED

“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, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2Tim. 3:16-17).

“Scripture” means both the Old and New Testaments. In 1Timothy 5:18 Paul writes, “the scripture saith”, and immediately quotes from Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7. This “God-breathed” word is profitable to teach us what is right – “doctrine”, to show us when we are wrong – “reproof”, to put us right again – “correction”, and then to keep us right – “instruction in righteousness”. The end in view is that we should be complete and fully equipped for every good work. What a practical Book the Bible is! We need it for every aspect of our lives and service. We need it to be fitted to live and labour as men and women of God.