



Weekly Devotion

Dedication to the Word

The word dedication is akin to our English words declare and devote. It comes from a medieval term meaning "to pledge." If you're dedicated to something, you're committed to it wholly and earnestly. You've found something that demands your life, your soul, your all.

For Christians, that cause is Christ and His Word. Evangelist John Wesley said, "I want to know one thing: the way to heaven. God Himself has condescended to teach me the way.... He has written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book! At any price give me the book of God. Let me be a man of one book."1

Read

If we're to be people of one Book, we have to read the Word. An article in a popular on-line magazine once referred to "the rise and fall of the Bible" in our modern world, saying, "American Christians buy millions of Bibles they seldom read and don't understand." Referring to the Scriptures, the author said that people today buy "truckloads of the things" but never read them. The average Christian household has nine Bibles and purchases at least one new Bible a year. "But actually reading them is another matter," the author said with cynicism.2

No, that's not true of you or me; but it reminds us to doggedly maintain our daily habit of reading the Bible. Start reading today where you left off yesterday, consistently and systematically. Isaiah 34:16 says, "Search from the book of the LORD, and read."

The apostle Paul exhorted us to give attention to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine (1 Timothy 4:13). The book of Revelation promises, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy" (Revelation 1:3). If you don't have a plan for reading the Bible, devise one for yourself today and start it at once.

Study

Second, study the Bible. How marvelous that God gave us a book large enough to contain all we need to know from Him, yet small enough to fit in our hands. We need to search it out. The idea of studying the Bible overwhelms some people, but you can begin by simply reading a verse and thinking about what it says. Write it down and study the structure of the sentence. Track down cross-ref-

erences. Look at the notes in a good study Bible. Read the passage in its context and keep reading and studying it until it becomes clearer. The Bible says, "The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them" (Psalm 111:2).

Memorize

Third, memorize the Scripture. Job 22:22 (NIV) says, "Lay up his words in your heart." By memorizing a verse of Scripture, you're inscribing God's Word on your brain. It sinks into your subconscious and even into your unconscious thoughts. It makes the Bible portable and allows the Scripture to transform your life by the renewing of your thoughts. What verse or passage are you working on right now?

Meditate

Fourth, meditate on God's Word. This is the forgotten habit of the church. Encircled by radios, televisions, computers, and portable entertainment devices, we're seldom quiet long enough to meditate. But try mulling over a verse of Scripture during your morning shower, your daily commute, or before falling asleep at night. If you walk for exercise, turn off your cell phone and ponder a specific passage, asking God to give you insight into its ramifications. According to the Bible, this is the secret of success. Joshua 1:8 says this about God's Word, "You shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Pray

It's also great to "pray the Scripture." After reading, studying, and perhaps memorizing a verse, turn it into a prayer for yourself or someone else. By doing that, you're bringing God's Word right back to Him. You're claiming it before His throne. You can do this with almost any passage, but it's particularly easy to "pray" the words of the apostle Paul. For example, based on Ephesians 3:16, you have Scriptural authority to ask God to grant you, "according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man."

That's probably a prayer you need right now. You un-

doubtedly know someone else who needs that prayer offered on his or her behalf. It's not inappropriate to think of the Bible as one huge prayer book, filled with petitions based on God's will for His people. Find a verse, put your name on it, or that of someone else, and claim it in prayer.

Practice

But here's the important thing. We can read, study, memorize, meditate, and even pray the Scriptures; but unless we obey its words, it does no good. Jesus made this clear at the end of His Sermon on the Mount. He told of two men, each of whom built a beautiful home. One man built his on a solid foundation, while the other built his on the sand. The first house stood the force of a howling storm; the other house collapsed.

In explaining His analogy, Jesus said that both men had heard the Word of God. The difference was obedience. The first man heard our Lord's sayings and did them. "But," He went on to say, "everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand" (Matthew 7:26).

Whenever you read a verse, ask: Is there an action I need to take, a command I need to obey, a change I need to make, or an attitude I need to adopt? Learn to read the Bible obediently.

Share

Finally, dedication to the Word of God means that we share it with others. This can be as simple as quoting a verse to a coworker, inviting someone to church, leading a Bible study, or passing the Turning Points magazine along to a friend. If we're filling our hearts with God's Word, it will show up in our conversation, for Jesus told us that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

How important is God's Word in your life? Which habit can you improve today? Be dedicated to read, study, memorize, meditate, pray, practice, and share God's Word. Let's pray with John Wesley: Lord, make us people of one Book!



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