

ATTITUDES TO HAVE WHEN READING THE WORD OF GOD

For the last couple of weeks, we have been looking at **why** reading the Word of God should be our **number 1 resolution** for the new year. From Psalm 19, verses 7-9, we noted six things that God says His Word **will do**—six things His Word **will accomplish**—in our lives. Let's turn there once again.

I want to emphasize the fact that I am not saying **what I think** God's Word will do in your life if you read and study it—these six things are **what God says will happen** in your life as you take in His Word!

What are those six things?

- 1) It converts us; it tells us how to become a child of God (vs 7a)
- 2) It wisens us; it gives us wisdom for living (vs 7b)
- 3) It rejoices our hearts meaning its truths bring us joy (vs 8a)
- 4) It enlightens our eyes meaning it sheds light on how to view life (vs 8b)
- 5) It develops the fear of the Lord in us which will, in turn, keep us from sin (vs 9a)
- 6) And it reveals truth to us regarding what we should **believe**—and how we should **behave**. (vs 9b)

Of course there are other reasons why we should read and study the Word of God. Here are four more so you have the nice round number of ten!

7) We are rewarded for obeying God's Word. Ps 19:11b "...and in keeping of them there is great reward."

We also see that truth in Joshua 1:8-9 and Psalm 1:1-3.

8) It is the means by which we change and grow. Romans 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

We are transformed—we are changed—when our mind is "renewed." **How** is our mind renewed? By reading and studying the Word of God! We also see that truth in II Corinthians 3:18 and I Peter 2:2.

9) It judges—it reveals—the thoughts and **motives of our heart**. Heb 4:12 "For the word of God is quick [living], and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

According to Jer 17:9, our hearts are "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked"—and we are **often blind to our sins**. God is not, though! And God the Holy Spirit uses His Word to challenge and convict us when our motives are **self-centered** instead of **God-centered**.

10) It is the means...the measurement...the tool... by which God will judge us some day!

Notice the words of Jesus in **John 12:48** "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: **the word that I have spoken**, the same shall judge him in the last day." **Two thoughts:**

a) What Jesus said **will judge you!** Jesus said—He spoke—the words of John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." If you **reject Jesus**—and the words of Jesus—**you will not get to the Father**—meaning heaven! As mentioned last week, don't think for one moment that **you** will be the exception!

b) Pretty safe to say it is not **just what Jesus said**, though, that will judge you! We would be extremely foolish to think, 'If it's not in red letters in my Bible, Jesus didn't say it! And if Jesus didn't say it, I won't be judged by it!' **The entirety** of God's Word will judge us—**not just the specific words** of Jesus!

This morning we are going to switch from **why** we should read God's Word to **how** we should read God's Word. Rather than talk about **the mechanics** of reading the Bible—like **where** we should start and **how much** we should read—I want to focus **on the attitudes** we should have when we open God's Word. God's Word will do things in our lives—if we come to it **with the right heart** attitude.

To hopefully help you remember them better, I'm giving them to you in the form of an acrostic—H-O-F. For sports enthusiasts, HOF stands for "Hall of Fame." Is there a **Hall of Fame** for reading the Bible? Obviously **not!** But...there are 3 attitudes that we must have when we come to God's Word. What are they?

Humility/Obedience/Faith. All 3 of these could be a sermon—or a series of sermons—in and of themselves.

What I hope to show us, though, is why they are absolutely essential when it comes to reading and studying the Word of God.

1. Humility

Before we think about **why** humility is important when it comes to reading the Bible, we need to define **what** it is we are talking about. A. What is humility?

A simple definition is the **absence of pride**—but that doesn't really tell us much!

Here's **one on-line definition** that I thought was helpful: "Humility is a biblical trait that involves genuine gratitude, a lack of arrogance, and a modest view of oneself." (<https://www.christianity.com › wiki › christian-terms › what-does-humility-mean-in-the-bible-why-should-we-be-humble.html>).

I would change "modest" to a **proper** view of ourselves, based on **who God is**—and **what God says** about us. We will expand on this a little more as we go through **what humility looks like** in our approach to God's Word.

B. What humility looks like. Please know that we are focusing on what humility looks like in the life **of a child of God** as they come to the Word of God. This is **not** the humility of a **lost person seeking to become** a child of God—this is referring to those who **already are** His child.

How should we who are born-again believers approach God's Word? What will that look like? The humble person is a **teachable person**; they are someone who **longs to be** taught. Let's turn to Psalm 119 and notice **how often** David expresses his desire **to be taught**.

--Vs 12 "teach me thy statutes." If we were to take the time to go through this entire Psalm, we would see that verses 26, 64, 68, 124, and 135 all end with "teach me thy statutes." Pretty safe to say David wanted to be taught!

--Vs 18. This is a good verse to memorize—and **to pray** just before we read God's Word! There's a song in our hymnal called "Open Our Eyes" that conveys the thought of this verse. The first stanza goes:

"Open our eyes, dear Lord; open Your holy Word.

Show us Your treasure there; show us Your beauty rare; Open our eyes, dear Lord."

There are numerous other verses we could turn to; here are a few more.

Psalm 25:4-5 "Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day."

Psalm 86:11 "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name."

Psalm 143:10 "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

C. Why do we need a humble, teachable spirit?

I'm sure there are many reasons; here are two:

1) It will **lead us away from** our wisdom. Our natural tendency is to be **wise in our own eyes**—and trust in our own wisdom. God warns us not to do that! Prov 3:7 "Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil."

In our Bible study hour the past few weeks, we been looking at the last few verses in John 9. I've given you two of those verses on your outline. **John 9:39-40** "And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they **which see not might see**; and that they **which see might be made blind**.⁴⁰ And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also?"

We know from the context—and especially from vs 40—that Jesus was talking about **spiritual** sight and **spiritual** blindness. Those that Jesus was talking about had a **spiritual pride** about them that stopped them from seeing the truth of God's Word. In their minds, **they could see**—they had it all together; they had everything figured out. But **their pride was blinding** them! They didn't sense their need, so they did not seek the truth of God's Word.

The humble, on the other hand—those that know they are blind—leave **their wisdom behind**. They know they are **needy**; they know **not to trust** their deceitful and desperately wicked heart—so they don't.

So a humble, teachable spirit leads **us away from** our wisdom—but it also **2)** leads us to seek God’s wisdom as found in His Word! **Proverbs 2:6** “For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” **Proverbs 3:5-6** “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”

What about you? **Do you** have a humble, teachable spirit—or do you **believe you know enough**. None of us would be so arrogant as to say we **know it all**, but a self-satisfied attitude that says, ‘I know enough’ will keep you out of God’s Word.

But when you begin to understand how deceitful your heart is...and how much you need God’s wisdom, you **will want to know** what God says. **Psalms 85:8** “I will hear what God the LORD will speak...”

One of the characteristics of a pastor is that they are to be **able to teach**. But in order for a pastor to be a **teacher**, there needs to be those that are **willing to be taught!**

Attitude # 1 needed when reading God’s Word? **Humility**; specifically a desire to learn.

Attitude #2? 2. Obedience

We need to come to God’s Word with a **desire to obey it!** We are not to be Bible **fact-gatherers** so we can be good at Bible trivia! And we are not to be **curiosity-seekers** that just want see (or hear) **some new thing** that we didn’t know before! God desires that we come to His Word with the desire **to obey it!**

A. God’s desire for obedience

Does God want us **to do what He says**? Of course, He does! We’re still in Psalm 119; look at vs 2 “Blessed are **they that keep His** testimonies...” To keep, of course, means to obey.

--Vs 4 “Thou hast commanded us to **keep thy precepts diligently**.”

--In vs 8, we see David’s desire to keep God’s Word.

--Now vs 9. Here we see that we stay **spiritually clean** by taking heed to—by obeying—God’s Word.

How much does God talk about His desire for us to obey His Word? In this chapter alone, David refers to keeping God’s Word at least **20 more times!**

You don’t need to turn there, but in **Mt 7:24-27**, Jesus talks about the wise man and the foolish man. **Trick question:** Which of the two **hears—listens to**—the sayings of Jesus? **Both of them!**

What **makes** the wise man wise is that he **doesn’t just hear** what Jesus says—**He does** what Jesus says! I’m absolutely amazed at how many Christians **look at obedience to God’s Word** as something they can **pick** and **choose** and **decide** for themselves what they want—like choosing food at a buffet line!

--The **desires of the boss**—or coach—are followed...and **the laws of the land** are obeyed (most of the time), but God’s commandments are considered **optional!** How can we think that that is okay?

Take your Bibles and turn to James 1. Some of you are familiar with these verses, but I want us to all see them in your own Bibles whether you are familiar with them or not.

--Look at vs 22. Can it be any plainer than that? Pretty much the same thing Jesus says in Mt 7. Don’t just **hear** God’s Word—**do what it says!**

B. God’s displeasure over our disobedience

What happens if we don’t do what God says? Once again, it would take a series of sermons to properly answer that question. Three quick thoughts; two from this passage in James 1:

1) You can be deceived. Look again at vs 22. If you are **not a doer**—and just a hearer—you are deceiving yourself! You might think your relationship with God is fine—but it’s not! Vs 26 talks about the man who thinks he’s religious—but he’s not!

2) Your understanding will not grow. This goes along with being deceived. I shared this thought with you a couple of weeks ago. Will God give you insight into His Word if you have **no intentions of doing** what it says? I don’t believe so! In fact, I think Jesus’ words of not “casting pearls before swine” (Mt 7:6) applies here.

3) You won’t be blessed. Look at the end of vs 25. What does it say? It says **the doer** of the work (what God says to do) shall be blessed in his deed. Will the “forgetful hearer”—meaning **the non-doer**—have the same blessing? Obviously not! Please don’t misunderstand me—I’m not saying your life will be in a constant state of turmoil if you disobey God. In fact, the Bible says there is **pleasure in sin** for a season—

meaning for a short time. But there isn't **pleasure forever** because we reap what we sow! You will not have a contentedness and peace that all is well between you and God because it is not!

Attitude #1? Humility Attitude #2? Obedience

Attitude #3? **3. Faith**

Why do we need to come to God's Word with an attitude of faith?

A. Faith delivers us from doubts

What kind of doubts? Many people have questions about the Bible that they struggle with. Questions like:

- 'I don't understand how it could have been written **by man**—but still be what God wanted written?'
- 'Why are there **so many translations**?'
- 'How can we know it was **translated correctly** when some words have more than one meaning?'
- 'How do we know that what we have now has not been **dramatically changed** by men?'

And the list goes on. Are these **legitimate** questions? **Yes—and no!** When would they not be legitimate questions? When they are asked with a **desire to discredit** the Word of God!

Just recently we had someone ask a question about one of the Bible verses on our church's Facebook page. I privately messaged DeAnna and asked her not to answer the question. Why? Because I know the individual who asked the question, and I'm fairly certain it was asked to start an argument—not because **she sincerely** wanted to know.

'Pastor, aren't you being judgmental. You are presuming you know her motives.' To which I reply, maybe—but **by their fruits** ye shall know them!' I've seen this individual get in other Facebook fights and arguments and was not going to "take the bait," so to speak!

There are others that are not quite **that antagonistic**, but they still get "bogged down"—or "hung up," depending on the way you look at it—about things **they can't understand**. Their logic can't quite grasp some particular issue so they **get stuck**—they become preoccupied—with something because they can't figure it out.

Logic—and sometimes our pride—says, 'I must figure this out!' **Faith**, on the other hand, accepts that **we don't have to have** answers for everything! God **spoke the world into existence**—out of nothing—in six literal days. Do I believe that? Yes, I do! Why? Because that's what God says!

And since God can **do that**, it is easy to believe that He can do **something much easier**—like **give us His Word and preserve it** so that we currently hold in our hands what He **wants us to know!**

So we need faith to **push past those doubts** and treat God's Word as it is in truth—God's Word! **I Thess 2:13** "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, **but as it is in truth, the word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Don't be overly analytical—or logical! Drive out the doubts with a simple, child-like faith!

Not only does faith **deliver us from doubts...**

B. Faith persuades us of the promises

I believe Romans 4:20-21 provides one of the **best definitions** of faith in the Bible. **Rom 4:20-21** "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was **strong in faith**, giving glory to God; ²¹ And **being fully persuaded** that, what He had promised, He was **able also to perform**."

Faith is what persuades us that what God promises, God **will** certainly perform.

Ps 19:11b "and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Faith says, '**I will be rewarded** for obeying God's Word. I don't know **when**—and I don't know **how**—but it is going to happen because it is what God promises.'

Lamentations 3:25 "The **Lord is good** unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that **seeketh Him**."

Heb 11:6 "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is **a rewarder of them** that diligently seek Him."

Faith says, 'God **will do good** unto me—and He will **reward me**—if I seek Him. I don't know when—and I don't know how—but it is going to happen because it is what God promises.'

Why do we need faith when it comes to reading the Word of God?

--First, because it delivers us from doubts

--Second, because it persuades us of His promises

--Third, because... C. Faith fuels faithfulness

That's true, isn't it?

A number of us in here have faithfully read God's Word for 40 plus years. Why?

Because our faith has fueled our **faithfulness**!

--**Without** faith, we would've given up and quit.

--**But with** faith, we haven't given up—and we won't give up!

What about you? Do you believe God will reward you if you obey His Word?

If you do, bring that attitude of faith—and faithfulness—to God's Word when you read it.

--But we also **need to obey** what God says—not just read it to gain intellectual knowledge.

--And we need to come to God's Word with **an attitude of humility** which is demonstrated by a teachable spirit.

Humility/Obedience/Faith. If you want to be a HOF-er when it comes to reading God's Word, those are the attitudes we need to have.

So what would God have us do with what we have heard this morning?

Hopefully—based on the blessings God says we will receive for reading His Word—you have an increased desire to do that.

But...we need the right attitudes, don't we?

1. Are you teachable? If not, you are proud!

And if you are proud, you need to repent of that sin and humble yourself!

2. Do you read God's Word with a desire to obey it? If not, you are being disobedient!

And if you are disobedient, you need to repent of that sin and start obeying!

3. Do you come to God's Word in simple, child-like faith? If not, you are doubting the One who is Truth!

And if you are doubting God, you need to repent of that sin and start trusting!

4. Lastly—but most importantly—are you saved...are you born-again...are you trusting Jesus—and Jesus alone—as the way for you to be forgiven?

If not, that is what God wants you to do!