

(Guidelines) Is the Bible Important

by J. Vernon McGee

J. Vernon McGee emphasizes the Bible's enduring importance and encourages comprehensive study and daily reading to enrich spiritual lives.

Duration: 29:59

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Proverbs 1:7, Isaiah 40:8, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2

Topics: "Bible Study", "Discipleship"

Description

The sermon transcript describes the goal of the through the Bible ministry, which is to give the entire Bible, the word of God, to men as they are. The speaker shares stories of how this ministry has impacted individuals, such as a mother in Alaska and a Navajo mother in Arizona. The speaker emphasizes the importance of discipline in studying the word of God and encourages listeners to read the Bible daily. The sermon concludes with an invitation to join the Bible bus and ride along on the safari through scripture, with the promise to stop at any corner and welcome new listeners.

Transcript

Now, as we begin this series, we are naturally going to begin in Genesis, but before we do, I want to give a very brief series on guidelines for the studying of the Bible. I would like to speak today on the subject of the Bible itself, because this is the book that we're going to be studying. It is probably the most malign book that has ever been written.

It has been attacked, as no book has ever been attacked, and yet today it has ministered and does minister to literally millions of people around the globe, and it's been doing that now for several thousand years. A book of this nature and with this tremendous impact upon the human family certainly deserves the intelligent consideration of men and women. Now, I want to say just a word about the Bible and what we are attempting to do in this Through the Bible program.

Many years ago in downtown Dallas, Texas, there was a church that had this very impressive message on a sign out over the sidewalk. The Bible as it is for men as they are. That to me is a tremendous statement.

Let me repeat it. The Bible as it is for men as they are. Now, that has been the goal of the Through the Bible ministry, and that is to give the entire Bible, the total Word of God, as it is, and give it to men as they are.

Let me just reach, as it were, in the air, and call to mind some things that just come to me at this time. There's a little mother up yonder in Alaska, a little Eskimo mother who lost a son in the war. She lives in a little town that is snowed in during the wintertime, and she wrote and told us what this ministry meant to her.

Out yonder on a reservation in Arizona in Navajo land, there is another Navajo mother who tells me that in the summertime she puts her little radio outside at night and listens. And then in the wintertime, she has to leave it outside as she can't get it, but she has to sit inside. And through the flimsy curtain of the hogan, she listens to the Bible teaching.

May I say, if these were the only two, I'd think it would be worthwhile to broadcast, but I think of the preacher that's down yonder in the Caribbean who wrote and said, he said, keep coming our way because if you don't, I won't have any sermons to preach. Well, I'd like to help him. And then there are multitudes of others that are using this radio ministry, and then they get the tapes and are using it.

We're delighted for that. We'd like to actually expand this ministry and have it reach as many people as possible because we believe, as others believe, and I hope we'll have time to give you some of those quotations today. So we are going to attempt to give the entire Word of God.

We believe that all the Bible is the Word of God and that all of it should be taught, not just some of it, not just the familiar books of the Bible. It's so easy, you know, to settle for that. Here's a little poem that came to me several years ago, and it's based on the statement in 2 Kings 23, 2. And he read all the words of the book, not just some of them, but all the words of the book.

And here is the poem. Let me share this with you today. I supposed I knew my Bible reading piecemeal, hit or miss.

Now a bit of John or Matthew. Now a snatch of Genesis. Certain chapters of Isaiah.

Certain Psalms, the 23rd. Twelfth of Romans. First of Proverbs.

Yes, I thought I knew the Word, but I found that thorough reading was a different thing to do and the way was unfamiliar when I read the Bible through. You who like to play at Bible, dip and dabble here and there, just before you kneel a weary yawning through a hurried prayer. You who treat the crown of writings as you treat no other book.

Just a paragraph disjointed, just a crude, impatient look. Try a worthier procedure. Try a broad and steady view.

You will kneel in very rapture when you read the Bible through. And so today we invite you to study with us the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, 66 books. Every chapter and most of the verses we'll be dealing with.

Oh, it's going to take five years to do it and if the Lord spares our lives, we'll all, I'm confident, be better men and better women and have the most thrilling experience that we've ever had. And I trust that you are going to come along with us in this wonderful experience that we are going to have. Now, I want to share with you some very outstanding quotations of men concerning the Bible because this is a book that has influenced the great men who in turn have influenced this world.

And I am of the opinion, and this of course is merely an opinion of a poor preacher here in Los Angeles, but I'm of the opinion the reason that we do not have great men today is simply because of the fact that we do not have men who at least respect and read the Word of God. Now, there have been great men of the past that you would not call them Christian, but they had a great respect for the Word of God. And today the hatred and the bitterness that is exhibited, especially on the part of some so-called great men, and they're not great, it just means television and radio and the newspaper has given them a prominence they do not deserve at all.

In fact, I'm sure that many of you recognize that we are given a pretty much of a lopsided viewpoint today. So let me go back, if you will, to way back in history and quote from certain ones that made a tremendous impact upon this world in which we live. There was an African prince who came to England and was presented to Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

And this prince made a very significant statement. In fact, it was in the nature of a question. And he asked her, he says, what is the secret of England's greatness? And the queen got a beautifully bound copy of the Bible and presented it to the prince with this statement, This is the secret of England's greatness.

And I wonder today, friends, the fact that England now has become not only a second-rate but a third-rate nation and England is having trouble getting friends as well as we are having today. I'm wondering if maybe that somehow or another that it's not tied up in the fact that England has gotten away from the Word of God. I believe that that's what made England great was the Word of God.

It's known in history that England was in for a bloodbath and a revolution, the same as France. But God raised up John Wesley and a revival came to England at that time. It might be interesting to note what some of our early presidents had to say.

The first president, Adams, made the statement, and I'd like to read this to you. He says, I have examined all as well as my narrow sphere. And he's speaking now, by the way, of the Bible.

I'm reading. Let me go back and read this then. I have examined all, that is, all of scripture, as well as my narrow sphere, my straightened means, and my busy life would allow me.

And the result is that the Bible is the best book in the world. It contains more of my little philosophy than all the libraries I've seen. And such parts of it as I cannot reconcile to my little philosophy, I postpone for future investigation.

And then there was another president, Adams, as you know, and the second president, Adams, said this. I speak as a man of the world to men of the world, and I say to you, search the scriptures. The Bible is the book of all others to be read at all ages and in all conditions of human life.

Not to be read once or twice or thrice through and then laid aside, but to be read in small portions of one or two chapters every day and never to be intermitted unless by some overruling necessity. That's the end of the quotation. Now, friends, let me hear you top that one.

He was the president of the United States. And the very interesting thing is, there were presidents back in those days that made our nation great. They didn't get us into foreign wars.

And they were able to solve the problems of the streets. Somebody says, well, they weren't as complicated then as they are now. They were for that day, my friend.

May I say to you that it's quite interesting to see that not only England, but that the United States today, we've gotten away from the Word of God. And the farther we get, the more complicated our problems become. And right now, there are certain men that are in positions of authority in this land that are making the statement that there's no solution to our problems.

That's the reason we're teaching the Word of God in all of its entirety, because we believe there is only one solution. And frankly, friends, I think we better get back to it. If we don't, we're gone.

Will you listen to another president? President Woodrow Wilson. And President Wilson, by the way, was a son of a preacher. He was a great man.

He was an idealist. He was a postmillennialist. And I never met a postmillennialist in my life that was not an idealist and who was one who never dealt with reality.

But that didn't keep him from being an outstanding man. And after all, he was president of Princeton and then became president of the United States. When I was just a student in seminary, they sent me down to preach at the First Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Georgia.

They were having, I think, a little difficulty in that church, and they felt like a seminary student couldn't hurt them very much, either good or bad. So they sent me down. And I went down and preached.

And I never shall forget, it was a hot day. And a hot day in the spring, and it can get hot down there and very humid. And they had me preach in a robe.

That's one of the few times that I've ever preached in a robe. And come to think of it, I think it was the only time. And I found out that if you'd strip to the waist and put on the robe, and then when you got up in the pulpit, if you'd make gestures by lifting your arms up and down, you'd create a draft and you could keep cool.

And somebody said to me, they said they'd never seen a young preacher make so many gestures. And I kept cool. I know that.

But I noticed when I was preaching that there was a plaque down on the first pew there to my left. I couldn't wait till after the service is over to go down and read that. When I did go down, I got down on my hands and knees and read it.

And you know what it said? It said that Woodrow Wilson, when he was a boy, sat in this pew with his mother when his father was pastor of that church. So may I say to you, I know something of his background and his belief because I was educated in that same tradition. And I know it does lead to a glorious idealism, but it does forget the great truth of the Scripture that man today is a sinner and he's totally depraved.

The League of Nations was ideal just as I suppose that today the little affair they have going on in New York City could be called that. But you see, it doesn't deal with human nature as it really is. Well, now let me quote from Woodrow Wilson about the Bible.

He says, "...I would be afraid to go forward if I did not believe that there lies at the foundation of all our schooling and all our thought the incomparable and unimpeachable Word of God." Now, my friend, Woodrow Wilson couldn't say that today. He could say that back in the teens, that is, 1914, 15, 16, on

through there. But he couldn't say that today, and that may be one of the reasons we're in such desperate condition today.

I would not want to be President of the United States. And friends, that's not sour grapes either. I wouldn't have it if they offered it to me.

And if anybody's thinking about running me, I trust you'll forget it, friends. I'm not going to run at all. Now, let me give you some other quotations today of great men concerning this book we're going to study, the Word of God, the Bible.

And it was Gregory the Great that made this statement. He says, "...it's a stream where the elephant may swim and the lamb may wade." And when I read that, I thought that about all we'd be doing would be like a little child at the shore or on the beach of a vast sea. And we'd have our little bucket and spade and be playing there.

But out before us, there'd be a vast ocean that we'll not be able even in five years to comprehend. But a glorious thing is ahead of us, friends. Judge Hale, years ago, wrote to his son this statement, "...there is no book like the Bible for excellent learning, wisdom, and use.

It is one of understanding in them who think or speak otherwise." I wish we had more judges like that today. Now, Thomas Jefferson was a deist. Thomas Jefferson, I think by the standards of those of us today that are conservative, I don't know whether we'd call him a Christian or not, but I certainly don't want to argue that point.

And I'm not sitting in judgment upon this great man. But I would like to quote what he had to say about the Bible. He says, "...I have always said and always will say that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands." That's something to think over today, in a day when citizens are burning down the cities in which we live and divorce is running rife today.

We're now almost, well, here in Southern California, divorce is equal to marriage is today. I'd like to give a few more quotations because I'm anxious to let you see that though the Bible may be in disrepute in many quarters today, and we'll look at that in time, but that this is the book that in the past that's brought greatness to this world, and we today somehow or another are losing that greatness. Will you listen to what Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great literary critic and writer of England, this is what he says, I'm quoting him now, and this is a statement that he made in his last sickness to a young man who sat up with him during the night.

And here is his statement to that young man. Quote, "Young man, attend to the advice of one who has possessed a certain degree of fame in the world and also will shortly appear before his maker. Read the Bible every day." End of the quote.

Now, I say to you, that's a tremendous statement, is it not? Now, I'd like to quote Daniel Webster. "I have read it through many times. I now make a practice of going through it once a year.

It is the book of all others for lawyers as well as divines, and I pity the man who cannot find in it a rich supply of thought and rules for conduct." That's end of quotation of Daniel Webster, and he read the Bible through many times. You see, today the tendency is, even among our conservative folk, to stay in familiar areas, especially when the other is so unfamiliar. In the Gospel of John, no one goes wrong there.

Philippians and many of us stay in prophecy, but there are others. One final quotation, and that is Thomas Carlyle. He was that Scotch philosopher.

I'm quoting, "A noble book, all men's book. It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem, man's destiny and God's ways with him here on earth. And all in such free-flowing outlines, grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity, in its epic melody and repose of reconciliation." My friend, we're going to be for the next five years talking about the Bible, not about the Bible.

We are going to see what the Bible has to say. May I say to you that today we're talking about it. And the difference will be when we get underway in Genesis, we'll not be talking about the Bible then, or attempting to defend it, but we will be attempting to teach the total Word of God.

I believe it with all my heart. And so as we begin this great venture going through the Bible, it's a safari through scripture. Well, I'm inviting you to ride the Bible bus.

And you can get on at any corner. That is, any day you tune in, you can begin, because when we finish, we'll start right over again. But we're on the way, and we'll stop at your corner.

And if you want on today, we'll be glad to have you join. Somebody says, well, then, what is it that you're asking us to do to make this a meaningful and enjoyable experience to us? Well, first of all, let me say, listen to the broadcast. Now, I recognize that many are not able to hear it every day.

I know a doctor down in San Diego. He makes a point of going from one hospital to another at noon in order to hear it down there. But he says sometimes he has an emergency and that he misses it.

So he gets the notes and outlines. And of course, down in that area, he has an opportunity to hear it on another station, which he does, he tells me. And then there's a salesman back in Indianapolis, Indiana.

And he's a salesman that covers a lot of territory. He says he just drives off the side of the road generally. But sometimes he's with a customer that's giving him a big order.

Well, you don't expect him to run out and tune on his car radio to listen to the broadcast. Well, I don't expect him to. I'll be very frank with you.

I want him to get that good order because he's a real friend of this radio ministry. And so the second thing that we ask you to do to write in for the notes and outlines which we are supplying, that will enable you to fill in the days that you have to miss. Now, I have letters from people that tell me if they never miss the broadcast.

I was amazed at that because I thought that no one could hear it every day. You want to know the truth? I missed it some days. I'll tell you how I missed it.

I made the tapes, but I wasn't around to listen to them anyplace. Well, I'm sure there are many people like that. So the second thing, write in and ask for the notes and outlines and give the notes and outlines a little time to get to you, especially if you live in the Middle West or on the east side of the Mississippi River because actually it takes several weeks now.

Mail is very slow. Did you know, frankly, we found out that Wells Fargo with the Pony Express and with the old stagecoach got mail across this country quicker than the post office departments getting it today? And I don't know what's the matter, but that's the way it is. And we have to live with it.

And I trust that if we're a little late getting to you. And then if you were on our mailing list and for some reason got off of it and you shouldn't have been, we'd like very much to put you back on. Then the third thing, and this is that which is all important.

This is the most important thing for you to do. Read the portion of Scripture we shall be studying beforehand, if possible. And my suggestion is that you read it again after we have finished it.

You will recall that last time I read quotations from a great man, Daniel Webster, for instance. And he read the Bible every day. May I say to you, it's a good habit to get into.

This is the Word of God. And this is a discipline for you. May I be very candid with you? This is the best discipline I've ever had.

A young preacher came into me some time ago and he said, Dr. McGee, I want to start this through the Bible program. It seems to have helped you. And he could see I needed help.

And he said, what way do you think that I ought to do this and what will it do for me and my church? I said, the first thing it'll do for you is it'll give you a discipline. Because I said, I've been a minister for many years and I've discovered that I can become sloven and careless also and not study the Word of God. But if I have a radio program that every day this radio says to me, boy, you are on and you have to study.

And believe me, it's been the most marvelous discipline for this poor preacher that you can imagine. And it's a good discipline for you, my Christian friend, in your Christian life, is to read the Word of God. And if you'll just read it, and it's not much to read each day, we're going to average one chapter when we get underway in our study.

Now, the fourth thing, and this, of course, is not essential, but to us it is essential. Tell others about the program and encourage them to tune in. We get literally hundreds of letters that tell us, the man I work with, or my neighbor, or my school chum, told me about your program, and we'll appreciate you telling your friends about the program.

Now, I would suggest, those of you who want to make a serious study, that you will not only want the notes and outlines that we supply, but you'll need three books that are essential. I formally taught in a Bible institute, and in the classes I had a question that I asked. And the question was, if you were wrecked on a South Pacific island, what three books would you want? And I got some very interesting answers.

One wag in the class, and I'll have to admit I had to pass him, he put down the three books that he would want would be the Bible and two copies of my book on Ruth, one to read and one to sell to the natives. Believe me, I had to pass that fellow for that answer, you can see, but that was not the answer I wanted. Actually, I asked the question like that because I'd said there are three books that are almost imperative and certainly essential for the study of the Word of God.

One of them is a concordance. A concordance is invaluable. And then the second, a Bible dictionary.

Now, I want to be practical here at the beginning. Somebody says, what concordance should you have? Well, there are three that are very good. Young's concordance and Strong's concordance and Cruden's concordance.

All three are good. And as a teacher of mine said, Young's concordance is for the young and Strong's concordance is for the strong and Cruden's concordance is for the crude. Well, you take your pick, friends, but you do need a concordance and you'll find it helpful.

A Bible dictionary. What Bible dictionary do you recommend? Somebody says, well, the Davis Bible Dictionary is a good Bible dictionary provided you don't get one that came out a few years ago. The old Davis Bible Dictionary is a good one.

Then they came out, a group of liberal editors got a hold of it, and believe me, it just didn't work out. Many reasons. It wasn't as scholarly as it should be.

I get a little weary today about the liberal telling me how intellectual he is and that we are an intellectual obscurantist, whatever that is. I don't think I'm that. But nevertheless, the Davis Bible Dictionary, at one edition, don't get it.

The last edition, I'm told, is good. I do not have the last one. I use the old one.

And then Unger's Bible Dictionary is one that you can recommend without any reservation at all. So that these are your Bible dictionaries and these are your concordances. And I would recommend that you have, somebody says, well, what is the third book? Well, I don't mean to mention the third book now.

This was number one. I hope you understood it was the Bible. And somebody said, well, what Bible do you recommend? Well, now I'm going to be talking about that probably next time.

And the Bible that we do recommend, that is, the version that we recommend.

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