

The Young Christian and His Bible

by John R. Rice

The Bible is the source of happiness and victory for a Christian, and it is essential to read, memorize, and meditate on it to grow in faith and get prayers answered.

Scripture: Psalm 1:1

Topics: "Bible Study", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

John R. Rice emphasizes the importance of Christians learning to be happy, victorious, conquer temptations, have influence for God, and win souls through loving, using, and meditating on the Bible. He highlights the significance of immersing oneself in the Word of God, drawing parallels to the early Christians who steadfastly followed the apostles' doctrine, which later became the New Testament. Rice stresses the blessings and prosperity that come from delighting and meditating on the law of the Lord, as described in Psalms 1:1-3, and the assurance, faith, answered prayers, and growth in grace that the Bible provides for believers.

Transcript

How will a Christian learn to be happy and victorious? How will he learn to conquer temptations and have influence for God and win souls? By loving and using and meditating in the Bible.

When those three thousand converts at Pentecost were saved and baptized, Acts, chapter 2, says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine ..." Now, they did not have printed Bibles, only manuscripts copied by hand, which very few people could afford. So preachers would read the Scriptures or memorize them and quote them in public. So what the apostles taught is what they wrote down in the epistles in the New Testament later. Later they would have Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and they would have the books of Acts and I and II Corinthians and Romans, etc.

So the apostles' doctrine was the teaching of the Old Testament and what God revealed to these apostles that would later be in the New Testament. It is the same, let us say, as the Word of God. Now we have the Bible all written down and printed. Every individual can have a Bible and can read it for himself. There are so many promises that depend on whether you love the Bible, listen to the Bible, meditate in the Bible. I do not know any way in the world for a young convert to be a happy, good Christian without taking time to love the Bible, learn the Bible, read the Bible, enjoy the Bible.

The Blessed Man Who Delights in, Meditates in the Bible Day and Night

Let's start with Psalm 1:1-3:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Now first he says this blessed man quits the Devil's crowd. He doesn't stand in the way of sinners. He doesn't walk in the way with the ungodly. He doesn't sit in the seat of the scornful. He breaks away from fellowship with the ungodly.

And what? "But his delight is in the law of the Lord." That is another word used first in the Old Testament, first for the Pentateuch and then came to mean the whole Old Testament. Here it refers to the whole Word of God.

What about this blessed man? "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Oh, how he loves it. He just memorizes a lot of it, thinks about it, enjoys it. And the Scripture says, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Everything he puts his hand to will be blessed. Let us be sure to get this sweet, blessed promise and claim it and live by it - the Word of God. Then you will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

This world is a pretty sad old world. There is a curse on the earth. The ground brings forth thorns and thistles. It is easier to grow weeds than a crop of corn. It is easier to do wrong than to do right. Even nature itself is under a curse. We have tornadoes, drought, floods, plagues of insects. There is a curse on this world. And Satan, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." This is a desert kind of world. Oh, a Christian needs help.

But I have good news for you. There is a river in this world the Word of God. And a blessed man is like a tree planted by that river and its roots go down and soak it up all the time, "like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." Christian, never mind - you have a source of blessing. What is that? The Word of God!

And whatsoever this man does will prosper. Isn't that a great promise? This is one of the biggest promises in the Bible for one already saved. You mean everything ...? Yes. You mean if I go to school I can I make top grades? Yes. You mean if I get a job I will get a good job and make good in it? Yes. Meditate in the Word, love the Word of God, then you will love the right woman, will have a happy marriage. You mean if God sends little children, you can rear them for God, and they won't be hippies nor dropouts nor dopeheads nor rebels against society? Right! You mean they will turn out to be godly Christians, serving God and making good? Right! Everything you put your hand to will prosper!

And if you will start out to win souls, God will help you. You can build a Sunday school class that will grow and prosper. "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper," if he turns his back on the Devil's crowd and meditates day and night in the Word of God. And "his leaf ... shall not wither." We have too many Christians with withered leaves. We have too many horsefaced Christians. We have too many sad Christians. A Christian ought not be sad.

Dr. Jack Hyles said the other day as he talked to a great crowd about serving God, "Dr. John Rice and I are two of the happiest men you ever saw." We are happy. We work hard. We preach hard. We weep over sinners. But we are happy. A Christian can be happy all the time IF he meditates in the Word of God. He can be like a tree, with his leaves always green, and bears fruit in season. "And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Christians Need "Every Word" of the Bible

Well, these people, the converts at Pentecost, continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching which now we have in the Bible. Steadfastly, daily.

So what ought a Christian do? Jesus talked about the Bible in Matthew 4:4:

"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Where did the Bible come from? Every word in the original manuscripts proceeded out of the mouth of God. Man is not to live just by food and digestion and building up his body; he is to feed his soul, too, on the Word of God: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

That is the way for a Christian to be happy. That is the way for a Christian to have what he ought to have. A Christian is to meditate in the blessed Word of God - all of it. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but BY EVERY WORD." Read all of the Bible? Yes. Learn it and have it in your heart? Yes. Every word. That is the way to be happy and be a good Christian.

Do you know what Jesus thought about the Bible? In Matthew 5:17,18 He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." How He loved the Bible! No wonder every now and then Jesus said, "The scripture saith," or He said, "... that the scripture might be fulfilled." Jesus believed it. He too wants us to love it and follow it. There is no way to be a good Christian without taking time every day with the Bible.

What the Bible Will Do for a Christian

What will the Bible do for you?

1. First, the Bible is the one thing that leads to salvation. First Peter 1:23 says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Born again by the Word of God.

Look at Psalm 19:7: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."

Jesus said, "A sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side." What is this seed that gets people saved? The Word of God. Then, the blessed Gospel!

Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

So the Word of God had a part in your salvation. You would not have been saved had you not heard the truth of the Gospel as it is in the Bible. We are sinners, Christ died for our sins.

Well, what does this Bible do for us?

2. That is the way to have assurance of salvation. Let me read again I John 5:13, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Do you want to be sure you are saved? Find what God promised and hook your soul on that. Rely on that. You can know you are saved. The assurance of the Word. If God says He gave you everlasting life when you trusted Him, believe it, because He did. If He says He will never cast you out, rely on it. That is the promise of God. The way to know you are saved is by the Bible, not by how you feel.

What will the Bible do for You?

3. It is the way to have faith. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." That will help you have faith.

4. Do you want your prayers answered? In John 15:7 Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." You may ask anything you want? If you are full of the Bible, and wrapped up in Jesus and concerned about Him, you will want to please Him. If you know the Bible well, you will know what He wants and so you can pray in the will of God and get your prayers answered.

There is a sad Scripture on this in Proverbs 28:9, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." If you turn your heart away from the Bible, then God says your prayers are no good. If you don't like God's Word, God says, "I don't like yours either." So the way to get your prayers answered is to love the blessed Bible, take time to meditate in it, learn it, and then pray. Try to pray in the will of God. Oh, you can do that.

What will the Bible do for you?

5. You will grow in grace. We read in I Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." You are to love the Bible. You are to meditate in it. You are to read it. You will then grow by the Bible. Then you can use the Bible to get people saved. You can use the Bible to show people they are sinners, to show them Jesus died for them. You can get people saved. So learn to use the Bible to show people they are sinners and how to trust in Jesus.

What a Christian Should Do With the Bible

What shall you do, then, about the Bible?

1. First, read it. Read it every day. Set out to read the Bible through in a year. That would mean read at least four chapters a day. I would not try to do less than that every year. Didn't Jesus say man ought to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God? Well, some of you never even read it one time. You couldn't possibly obey that Scripture. You can't be a good Christian unless you read the Bible, and read all the Bible.

What else? I would read it consecutively. If you are reading in Genesis, read the first chapter of Genesis, the next day read the second chapter, or if you read the first three chapters there, then I would read three more until you finish that book. If you are reading in Matthew 1, then read Matthew, chapter 2, etc. Read consecutively in the Bible.

2. I would read the King James Version. You say it is hard to understand. No, it is not. You have heard somebody talk like that. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" - is that so hard to understand? "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" - is that so hard to understand? "Blessed are the peacemakers" - is that hard to understand? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" - is that hard to understand? No. The truth is, if you mean business you can understand the Bible. Read the King James Version.

What about the Amplified Version, the Expanded Version? All those words are not in the Bible. Those are men's commentaries on the Bible. What about the Living Bible? It is what some man writes down, what he thinks the Bible may have meant. It is not a translation; it is a paraphrase and not reliable. Any paraphrase is only reliable as man's wisdom, and man's wisdom is never as good as the Word of God itself. And that, of course, is part of the trouble with the Revised Standard Version and the New English translation, Moffatt's translation, and many others. Use the King James Version. I have seventeen or eighteen translations, but I use the King James Version all the time. That is by all means the best.

I would get a Scofield Reference Bible if I could. I do not necessarily agree with every little detail of the notes, but it is by far the best reference Bible in the world. I would get a Scofield Reference Bible and I would read it every day.

What else?

3. Then I would set out to memorize some sweet things.

I was on a plane the other day, going down from Oklahoma City to Dallas. My Bible was packed in my briefcase, so I quoted by memory Psalm after Psalm to myself. I quoted the first Psalm, then the 103rd Psalm, the 121st Psalm, the 23rd and the 126th. I quoted some of those sweet Psalms to myself and had a good time in the Lord. Some things I thought about that I had never seen before in those sweet Psalms. I already had the words in my heart, now I could meditate on the meaning since I already know the words of many of the chapters and thousands of the verses in the Bible. Set out to meditate in the Bible.

Then what? Oh, love it. Memorize some of it. Have it in your heart. Read it every day. Ask God to help you understand it and love it.

Sometimes when I have gone to bed at night I have gotten the Bible and put it under my pillow. I wanted it closer than that so I put it in my arms and went to sleep with the Bible at my breast. Oh, the Bible! You ought to love it and set out to learn it and delight in it.

4. Then I would use it to win souls. Use it to comfort your heart. Use it to help you do right. A Christian cannot be a good Christian except as he learns the Bible, loves the Bible, tries to follow the Bible. I hope you will say, "I am going to be a good, mature Christian. I am going to grow. I am going to be a good, strong Christian." That will mean setting out to know and use the Bible. May God bless you in it.

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