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## READ THE BIBLE.

H. C. Moore.

To get the most good out of your Bible reading, you must come to the sacred page with a heart full of prayer, a mind alert and receptive, and a hand ready and willing to obey.

First, then, read it prayerfully. Spiritual discernment is needed even more than intellectual insight, and this is secured only by earnest perusal in the spirit of fervent, effectual prayer. It was the spirit of the boy Samuel who said: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," and of the Psalmist, who prayed: "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." Luther used to read his Bible on his knees. In the same attitude Whitefield read the Bible day by day with Henry's Commentary, praying over each word and sentence. Edward Payson also studied the Bible upon his knees, or prostrated on the floor, with the Book open before him, pleading the promise, "When he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." In the same way Richard Baxter used to study the texts of his sermons, placing his finger on the word of which he wanted a deeper sense and crying out, "Lord, reveal even this to me; show me thy meaning!" And if we thus search rather than skim the Scriptures, as Dr. Hamilton suggested, then may we expect the illumination of the Spirit and an infilling of Scripture knowledge.

Again, read it studiously. This is not saying that every reader of the Bible is called upon to study as deeply as the preacher or the theological professor, notwithstanding he is at perfect liberty to do so. It means simply that he is to read with his eyes open, ready to detect shades of verbal meaning or to observe the broad transition lines of a story or doctrine, of a book or group of books, or even of the entire Bible. The perceptive faculties are not only to be whetted, but actually brought into exercise. To focus the mind and hold it with effect upon the sacred story may require closer attention than is ordinarily bestowed. Pen or pencil is a great aid to the reader: as Quintilian has said, "To read without a pencil is to sleep." The plan of general reading adopted by Macauley in early life is to be commended to Bible readers: At the foot of every page he stopped and obliged himself to give account of what he had read on that page. Three or four readings were at first necessary to get his mind firmly fixed, but rigid compliance with the plan enabled him in later years to almost literally memorize any passage at a single reading. "It is a very simple habit to form in early life," he says, "and it is valuable as a means of making our reading serve the best purpose."

Once more: Read it practically. The words of Dr. F. B. Meyer are worth our while: "Each day read your chapter or passage with the idea that you are receiving your marching orders; that there is some new service to render, some new duty to perform,

some new virtue to acquire." Perhaps it was the same sentiment which long before caused Cromwell to give a Bible or a portion of it to each of his soldiers to carry with them. And it was the same thought which John Ruskin enjoined upon the students of Oxford when he said to them: "Make it the first morning business of your life to understand some portion of the Word clearly, and your daily business to obey it in all you do understand." Such a course is essential to well-rounded development and a well-directed usefulness. I think it was A. C. Dixon who said that in order to spiritual health, Word and Work must be combined, but in proper order and proportion. "If it be all Word and no Work, people will suffer from religious gout. If it be all Work and no Word, it will not be long before they will fall into all kinds of sin and error; so that they will do more harm than good. But if we first study the Word and then go to work, we shall be healthy, useful Christians."

"Read, then; but first thyself prepare, To read with zeal and mark with care:

And when thou read'st what here is writ,

Let thy best practice second it: So twice each precept read shall be, First in the book, and next in thee."

Raleigh, N. C.

## SYSTEMATIC GIVING.

I have been asked to discuss briefly with the readers of this paper the subject of Systematic Giving—a subject of no mean importance, as it is one which vitally concerns the progress of the Master's kingdom among men.

Perhaps it would be well for me to say in what way I consider the subject as vitally related to the progress of the Master's kingdom. As I view it, the subject is thus related in a two-fold way, viz.: Systematic giving increases contributions, and every one with observation must admit that developments along the various lines of Christian activity demand continually increased contributions. This being so and systematic giving tending always to increase contributions, any one can easily see how vital is the relation. Again, systematic giving increases the spirit of liberality. And this is highly important, since it is commanded that we give "liberally," "cheerfully," and "not grudgingly." How often, under some high pressure, there are those who give and on the way home from the place where the service was held wish they had not made their contribution so large! The Lord will use what has been contributed for His glory, but the spirit of liberality has not been cultivated in the giver and he will not experience that blessing experienced by him who follows up his gift with his heart's most earnest prayer. Giving is a grace, and we may thereby worship God as truly as in song or prayer. Systematic giving cultivates, develops, that spirit of liberality which is necessary in order that our gift may count for the very most.

I understand systematic giving to be the making of regular contributions; giving, not spasmodically under high pressure, but laying aside for the Lord's cause regularly as He has prospered us. With this understanding of the term, I want to ask and answer two questions in concluding this discussion:

1. Is systematic giving practicable?

2. Is systematic giving Scriptural?

First, then, is systematic giving practicable? My unhesitating answer is that nothing could be more practicable, especially among our people of the towns and cities. The average wage-earner receives his wages at the end of each week; he can much better afford to give fifty cents out of each week's wages (say seven dollars) than he could to give six dollars the last week in the year. With the

wage-earner, then, the system would be highly practicable. And what is true of the wage-earner is alike true of the manufacturer, the merchant, and the professional man. Our women, as a rule, have only a small amount of money at the time and could give in this way with much less inconvenience and in much larger amounts, in the aggregate, than they otherwise could do.

Second. Is systematic giving Scriptural? The Bible is a book of order, and no way of giving can be more orderly than giving at regular intervals, as best suits the individual case. Then, too, there is the direct command to "lay by in store upon the first day of the week as the Lord hath prospered us." Systematic giving cannot be attained in any congregation at one leap or bound, but must come of diligent instruction and painstaking leadership.

Burlington, N. C.

## FAITHFULNESS IN SMALL THINGS.

A number of years ago in a town in Germany there lived a chainmaker unknown to fame. He was poor, but an excellent workman and very conscientious in all that he did. He might have shirked his work. He might have done poor, imperfect work, but no, each link of the great chains he made must be right, and so he labored. Years pass and on the great ocean there sails a large vessel with many passengers. On the deck is coiled the great chain, attached to the sheet-anchor. It lies there unnoticed, unthought of. Suddenly a storm arises and grows in intensity. So fierce does it become that the ship is in danger. She flounders. Anchor after anchor is cast over, but the storm is so severe that the chains snap like cords. Then comes the captain's order: "Let go the sheet-anchor!" Now is the moment of suspense. It is the last hope of safety. Will it share the fate of the others? Down into the deep it goes. In a moment the chain is out its length. The vessel quivers from stem to stern between the grasp of the two forces—the storm and the anchor.

The old German chainmaker is battling with the elements. He wins. The anchor holds. The vessel is saved. Honor to the faithful old man. His work stood in the great moment of trial.

In the last great day "every man's work shall be tried," and faithfulness, faithfulness alone, will win the crown. May we hear the voice of our ascended Lord saying to each one of us: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."—F. Hutchinson, in "Pulpit Treasury."

## LOOK UP.

It is wise for us to look at the dangers, to be fully aware of the perils, to be tremulously conscious of our own weakness; but it is folly and faithlessness to look at the danger so exclusively, or to feel our weakness so keenly, as that either one or the other, or both of them combined, shall obscure to our sight the far greater and confidence-giving truth of the knowledge, the sympathy and the extended protecting hand of our Brother and our Lord. We belong to Him, if we have yielded our hearts to Him, and He will not "suffer His holy one to see corruption," here and hereafter.

If you look down from the narrow ledge of the Alpine heights to the thousand feet of precipice on either side of the two or three inches where you have your footing, you will get dizzy and fall. If you look up you will walk steadily. Do not ignore the danger, nor presumptuously forget your own weakness; but "when I said my foot slippeth, Thy mercy held me up." Recognize the slippery ice and the feeble foot and couple with them the other thought: "The Lord knoweth them that are His."—Alexander MacLaren.

## THE PROMOTION OF BIBLE STUDY IN THE HOMES OF OUR PEOPLE.

By E. Y. Mullins, President Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

### It is Necessary.

1. Its Necessity. I suppose no reader of the Biblical Recorder needs to have urged upon him arguments to prove the necessity of Bible study in the home, and yet it may be helpful to glance briefly at a few. One thing which makes necessary this study is to reinforce Bible study in the Sunday-school. There has been much discussion of the relation between the Sunday-school and the home. In this matter I am not among those who believe there is any conflict. But if the best work is to be done in the Sunday-school, there must be some work done in the home also. Nothing is more helpful to the Sunday-school scholar than sympathetic interest on the part of the parent in the lesson and Bible study required by the school. Parents can do more than any others to promote the best work in the Sunday-school in the direction of Bible study.

A more general consideration enforcing the necessity of Bible study in homes is that it is of the utmost importance in our day that the forces which make for character should control those which make for intelligence. We are rapidly educating our young people in our public schools, in the academies, colleges and universities. All that there is to be known in the direction of unbelief and skepticism is put thus within their reach. The best check to tendencies which will inevitably be brought to bear upon them is such study as can be given to the Bible. Much of modern science is Christian, and this should be freely recognized; but there are found types of scientific opinion which are un-Christian and anti-Christian, and these are met with in many of our institutions of higher education. The boy who is anchored to the faith before he enters schools in which such teachings are found is usually safe. It is of the utmost importance that the impressions coming from Bible study, in order to be most effective, should take place early in life.

Once more, the study of the Bible is the best means of developing spiritual character to qualify the boy and girl to resist the temptations of life. Nothing is so sure and abiding as an intimate knowledge of the Word of God.

Again, it is to be noted that the shortest and quickest road to a true revival of religion in any community is a direct return to the study of the Bible. One of the generalizations of Christian history which will stand the test of most searching investigation is this: every general revival of spiritual Christianity has come as the result of a return to the literary sources of Christianity, viz., the Bible. A revival without the presentation or study of Bible truth is impossible. The Bible is the one book of revivals. It is the only book, and whenever revivals come, they come either directly or indirectly from the power of the truth contained in the sacred Word. Thus the spiritual life of the individual and the spiritual life of the churches will be promoted in the highest degree by the study of the Bible in the home.

### It is Possible.

2. Notice, in the second place, the possibility of Bible study in the home. There are many alleged obstacles and hindrances to such study. We are told that men and women are too busy to study the Bible; that the modern father, engrossed as he is in business, going away to his business early in the morning and returning late at night, has not the opportunity or time to give to the mastery of the portions of the Bible necessary in order that he may lead his family in their studies. The mother also is engrossed in social cares and is unable to command the time necessary. Life is very full, we are told; we travel at a very rapid

pace, etc., etc. Doubtless these things are true in regard to men and women of the larger towns and cities, but it is not true of all those who live in the country. Moreover, it does not follow that busy people are the ones who cannot do this thing. For one, I believe thoroughly in the possibility of a measure of Bible study in any Christian home where the father and mother resolve that it shall be done. To this end, however, certain general truths are to be recognized. One of these is that to accomplish the best things we must recognize an eclectic principle in life; that is to say, we must select such things as are most worthy of our time and leave some other things undone. "The good is the enemy to the best," some one has said. Unquestionably this is true. We must adopt as our rule for living an eclectic principle. We must discriminate and select. The lowest forms of animal life—those so small that they are invisible save under a powerful microscope—are possessed of organs for discriminating between that which is food and that which is not. Shall man, the highest animal, and who is far more than animal, decline to exercise this discriminating power, and especially man who has been taught of God, by His Spirit, the relative values of life?

Another general truth which must be recognized is that we must be content with less speed and more progress. There is a vital distinction here. Man is not necessarily making progress because he is travelling rapidly. It depends altogether on where he is going and how safely he is making his journey whether or not speed is progress. It may be necessary to sacrifice some things that have been regarded as elements of progress in order that we may attain to real progress.

Again, the argument against the possibility of this home study of the Bible, properly regarded, is really an argument in favor of it. Busy people are usually those who are the best economizers of time. They have learned how to utilize short bits of time to advantage. They have learned how to plan. This is necessary, of course, if any results are to be accomplished in the direction indicated in our modern busy life.

Again, the matter of possibility is determined by the dominant motive in our conduct. The imperative mood controls all other moods. The thing that must be in motive will be in result. Jesus said: "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." So should all of us say. The spirit of Jesus was: "Whatever else must be left undone, this must be done." The possibility of Bible study in the home will be dependent upon the manner in which we allow this spirit of the Master to become the dominant motive.

Some one has said we Americans boast of our open Bible. We would fight for this open Bible and defend it, if need be, with our lives. Indeed, we are willing to do almost anything for the Bible except to study it and know it. This charge is one that has too much truth in it, and by all means Christian people should see to it that it is not a true one as applied to them.—Biblical Recorder.

"Do you think the world is getting better or worse?" one young man asked another. "Both," was the reply. "I think the bad of the world is worse than ever before, and its good better. But I think also that if a balance should be struck, the good would outweigh the evil more than in any previous day." If we believe that God is ruling the world, we must believe this also. And, believing this, we will work harder than ever to increase the power and the balance of the good over the evil.

The more profound and spiritual your work is the greater the difficulties you will have to work against.