

Building A Bible Reading Habit Series

April 29, 2020

Scripture: Matthew 7:21-27, John 8:31-32

Summary: In this lesson, we discover there is a better way to build a better Bible reading habit, all by redirecting our emotions and rewards.

Today's we are looking to build a Bible Reading Habit.

And let's confess there is not a man alive who couldn't do better in this area. But let's address the facts.

There are two I want you to notice.

First, as many of you know, The Bible is the best-selling, least read, and most misunderstood book in the world.

Many of you are already aware that the Bible is the first book ever printed and widely dispersed after the printing press was invented in 1440.

Yet the problem for many of us is not that we don't have a Bible, it is that we don't read it.

Just look at the second statistic from the Gallup Organization.

They say that in their studies of Christians, 64 percent of those questioned said they were "too busy" to read the Bible.

I assume this fact isn't shocking. But what this tells us, is that there is a major gap between Bible ownership and Bible use. A 64% gap!

And I find it astounding that we believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, and yet are too busy to read the most valuable resource we have that contains objective and inspired truth.

So, our goal in today's lesson is to discover the value of Bible reading with the outcome of developing new Bible reading habits that get us consistently into the Bible more.

One best practice to use is reading the Bible on audio early in the morning.

I have a pair of headphones next to my bed, and when I cannot sleep, or wake early in the morning, I read my Bible on audio. It took me a while to get good at reading this way, but I loved it.

Let's turn to the text.

Matthew 7:21-27

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

I think this text is great on teaching us the value of God's Word.

Jesus begins by creating a lot of tension around the fact that in the end there will be believers who think that they know the truth, but get it all wrong.

Here Jesus is referencing the religious officials of the day and the fact that their righteousness was built on performance and showmanship alone.

And although their life manifested righteous actions, underneath their motivations were misaligned.

But then Jesus connects a construction analogy to help us understand the connection between the values of God's Word and our deeper motivation.

He imagines a violent storm striking two types of houses or men.

In the situation, everything appears very similar on the surface, except for a few one unseen difference – the location of the foundation.

There is one house, or man, who hears and does, contrasted with a man who hears and “looks like he does.”

Thus, one man builds his life on a rock, and the other on the sand.

Let me say it this way to bring attention to what Jesus is illustrating.

There is one man who hears and pretends.

There is another man who hears and does not pretend.

And the difference between the two is “how they listen” and act.

The deeper issue for Jesus is one of motivation.

Showmanship means nothing.

But remember, Jesus is not giving us construction advice, he is talking about the method we use to build our life.

And with the inclusion of the additional text, we discover that Jesus is taking the application beyond proclamation, appearances, showmanship, and seen behaviors into motivational change.

This is found by connecting the introduction in verses 21-23 with the illustration in verses 24-27.

And the call is for us to get both right.

Let me give you an example of how this might work.

And you may want to take a couple of notes here.

So, for me, traditional One-year Bible Reading Plans seem to promote all kinds of negative feelings for me that lead to bad habits.

And I believe these emotions are not beneficial for reinforcing a healthy Bible reading habit.

Here are two reasons why.

Either, I often start well, then I miss a day or a week and this produces guilt and then I try to make up for lost time by reading multiple days.

Or I start off well, and I just get lost from all the jumping around between the Old and New Testament and feel disconnected from the story.

And these approaches lead me to negative feelings, which reinforce all the reasons why I fail to build the habit with positive rewards.

So, I confess, I quit using Bible Reading Plans years ago. Not because they don't work, but because they don't work for me.

Today, I set my reading habit and process on Comprehension Not Completion.

Rather than focusing on "daily reading that gets me through the Bible in one year" (completion), I focus my process on "regular patterns of reading that deepens my love for God's Word" (comprehension).

Here is what this looks like for me.

First, read on a regular basis usually in five-day sprints.

And when I read I set my sights on a single book at a time, with no particular pace to my reading.

Read until you have read enough, this can be about 5-8 chapters at a time.

Second, within my reading, I identify one text or theme that challenges me. And usually, I spend a minute or two on that text confessing or considering how applying that will make me a better man.

Third, throughout the day I find one way to share it with others.

This could be sharing the principle of the text, and not the text itself.

But I find that every day, God gives me some opportunity to share it.

And it is addicting, or habit-forming, to see the Spirit at work through this process, which reinforces a positive reward that keeps me coming back for more.

While this method may not get me through the Bible in one year, it is inspiring to see a personal process, and habit changes you and transforms others.

And this is how I have built a better Bible reading habit.

And maybe you can get more creative, but I will leave that up to you.