

“HAVE YE NOT READ?”

Matthew 12:3, 5 (and others).

We came across this question before when dealing with Jesus’ teaching on marriage and the Sabbath. Jesus asked this question several times.

- *“Have ye not read what David did...”* (Mt. 12:3 cf. 1 Sam. 21).
- *“Or have ye not read in the law...”* (Mt. 12:5 cf. Num. 28).
- *“Have ye not read, that he which made them...”* (Mt. 19:4 cf. Gen. 1).
- *“Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes...”* (Mt. 21:16 cf. Ps. 8:2).
- *“...as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read...”* (Mt. 22:31-32 cf. Ex. 3:6).
- *“And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.”* (Mk. 12:10 cf. Ps. 118).

There is a hint of surprise in Christ’s question—*“Have YE NOT READ???”*— Come on! You should know these things if you read Genesis, Samuel, Exodus, Psalms, Numbers! Each time Jesus asked, *“Have ye not read?”* He was addressing religious leaders! If anyone should have been reading the Scriptures, it should have been them!

Jesus held people **accountable** for reading and knowing the Scriptures.

During Christ’s earthly ministry He quoted from 24 different Old Testament books. Jesus knew the power of God’s written Word. As Jesus said, *“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”* (Mt. 22:29). Hosea 4:6—*“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”*

One recent Gallup poll indicated 89% of people in the U.S. will not read the Bible today. That means only one out of every 10 people, will pick up a Bible to read it today. 22% of people in America have NEVER READ THE BIBLE. *Barna Research* estimates there are 4.7 Bibles per household in American (2014). The Bible may be a “best-seller” but it isn’t a “best-reader.” Gallup concluded, “People revere the Bible, but they don’t read it.”

100 years ago, America was a nation of Bible readers. Today it is a nation of Bible “revisers.” Now we have... HD TV’s... DVD’s... computers... iPads... the internet... RV’s... smart phones AND *Pokémon Go!*

We have modern “conveniences” that supposed to save us time, but we have less time to read the Bible.

The American patriot Patrick Henry, near the end of his life said: “Here is a Book, the Bible, worth more than all others that were ever printed; yet it is my misfortune never to have found time to read it.” So sad!

I. **WHY PEOPLE DON'T READ THE BIBLE?** 6 reasons:

- A. Some say it's **DULL**—Some say it boring. Within the first 7 chapters: Murder... A rapture... Invaders from outer space who cohabit with women producing giant hybrids... World-wide flood!
- World wide flood is dull? A local flood gets prime media coverage. Noah's ark is not boring!
 - Warfare—Wars are in the news almost daily, but nothing compares to the wars fought in Joshua, Samuel, and Kings.
 - Intrigue—People enjoy mysteries and suspense. The story of Joseph and Esther is full of suspense and intrigue.
 - Adventure—The excitement in Judges, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings makes Indiana Jones appear humdrum and mundane.
 - Sci-fi / Disaster movies / Scary — *Star Wars* doesn't compare with the Book of Revelation. It is one of the most frightening and “scary” books ever written. [Demon locusts from Hell... rivers of blood... massive earthquakes... 100 lb. hailstones.]
- B. Some say it's **DIFFICULT** — Some say it's hard to understand.
1. Perhaps it is because you are not saved (1 Cor. 2:14).
 2. The fact that there is much in the Bible that is not understood is proof that a man didn't write it.
 3. God's Word goes contrary to human logic.
 - The way up is down (Mt. 23:12).
 - The way to get is to give (Luke 6:38).
 - To die is gain (Phil. 1:21).
 - The way to save your life is to lose it (Mk. 8:35).
 - Weakness is strength (2 Cor. 12:7-10).
 - Love your enemies (Mt. 5:43-44).

- Do more than is required (Mt. 5:41-42; Luke 17:10).
- C. Some say it's **DEMANDING**—It is authoritative.
1. It demands change and people resist change.
 2. It demands obedience and people don't like to be told what to do.
- D. Some say it's **DISTURBING** (Acts 24:25; 2 Chron. 34:18-27 cf. Ezra 9:4).
1. It disturbs man's conscience—It is convicting.
 - ➡ The Bible knows all about you and tells it (Heb. 4:12; James 1:23-24).
 - A Christian who smokes is convicted by 1 Cor. 3:16-17.
 - A Christian who is worldly is disturbed by James 4:4.
 - A Christian who is unfaithful attending church is bothered by Hebrews 10:25.
 2. It disturbs people's routine and their way of doing things.
 3. It disturbs people's thoughts. It makes people think about things they don't want to think about—Eternity... death... judgment.
 4. It disturbs people's pride and self-esteem (Isa. 66:4; Ps. 39:5; Luke 16:15).
- F. Some say it's **DIVISIVE**— As a sword, the Bible divides truth from error. It causes people to take sides. That is why some liberal ministers say we must discard Bible doctrine in order to have unity. To some unity is more important than truth. Doctrine is divisive. While that is true, doctrine also unites.
- E. Some say it's **DISRESPECTFUL** in it's language. The Bible says hard things that is offensive to some people (John 6:60-61, 66).
- Calls an atheist a FOOL (Ps. 14:1)
 - Calls an unsaved woman a PIG (2 Pet. 2:22).
 - Calls unruly and vain talkers "*evil beasts*" and "*slow bellies*" (Titus 1:10-12).
 - Calls certain religious leaders SNAKES (Mt. 3:7; 23:33).

- That is what some Christians had against Paul—His uncouth language (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6).

II. WHY PEOPLE SHOULD READ THE BIBLE. The question, “*Have ye not read...*” implies that you should read! 7 Reasons:

- A. Because being **SAVED** is impossible without it (2 Tim. 3:15; Rom. 1:16; Ps 19:7; James 1:18).
1. No one has ever been “*born again*” apart from the Bible (1 Pet. 1:23)!
 2. Life can only come from that which is LIVING. God’s Word is ALIVE (Heb. 4:12; John 6:63, 68; 20:31). The things of this world can never impart real life.
 3. Assurance of salvation is based on the Scripture, not feelings (1 John 5:13).
- B. Because spiritual **GROWTH** is nourished by it (1 Pet. 2:2; Mt. 4:4).
1. It nourishes your soul. Many Christians are spiritual pygmies because they do not spend time in the Word of God (Heb. 5:23-24).
 2. It enlarges your faith (Rom. 10:17).
 3. It enlightens your path (Ps. 119:105). The Bible contains answers to what you are struggling with right now. It has insights to help you deal with problems you are facing. It has light to shed upon your path.
 4. It inspires hope (Rom. 15:4).
 5. It promotes success (Ps. 1:2-3).
- C. Because spiritual **WARFARE** is lost without it.
- ➡ God has given us a weapon—“*the sword of the Spirit*” (Eph. 6:17).
1. Jesus was victorious over Satan’s temptations by using the Scriptures (Mt. 4).
 2. You will never overcome the wiles of the devil in your own strength—You need “*the sword of the Spirit.*”

3. Satan hates the Bible. The first thing Satan attacked in this world was God's Word (Gen. 3:1). The devil will do all he can to keep people from reading the Bible. He knows the Bible spells his doom and will ultimately defeat him.
- D. Because spiritual **DISCERNMENT** is gained from it. Try the spirits (1 John 4:1; Isa. 8:20; Acts 17:11).
- E. Because spiritual **CLEANSING** is wrought by it (John 15:3; Eph. 5:26; Ps. 119:9, 11).
- ➡ D.L. Moody said, "The Bible will keep you from sin and sin will keep you from this Bible."
 - ➡ "Two things you will never part—Dust on the Bible and Drought in the heart."
- F. Because the **KNOWLEDGE** of God is obtained through it.
- ➡ When you read a book, you are reading it's Author. You become acquainted with it's Author (John 5:39).
1. Christ's example in Matthew 12:5-7. Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 — *"For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."* If the Jews had read Hosea 6:6 they would have known *"the knowledge of God"* is more desirable than offerings and sacrifice.
 - If you are not reading your Bible, any knowledge you have of God, you got second hand. You need to know the Lord on a first hand basis.
 2. The only way to become familiar with God and His ways is by reading the Scriptures. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. God's ways are not our ways. Therefore, to know God's ways/thoughts, we must read His Word.
 3. The more time you spend with God and His Word, the more you become like Him (2 Cor. 3:18—*"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."* (cf. James 1:23). A mirror is no good unless it is used.

G. Because **OBEDIENCE** is dependent upon it (1 Tim. 4:13; Col. 3:16; John 5:39).

- It is a sin not to read the Bible (James 4:17).
- Bible study begins with BIBLE READING (2 Tim. 2:15).

SUMMATION: I can only think of two “valid” reasons why a person cannot read the Bible: (1) They are dead; or (2) the rapture has occurred!

Someone says, “But preacher, I don’t know how to read.” If the Bible is important enough to you, you can take some remedial classes and learn how to read! You can also listen the Bible on most Bible apps.

ILLUS: HE READ THE BIBLE WITH HIS TONGUE— Evangelist Robert Sumner writes in his book *The Wonders of the Word of God*, about Mr. William McPherson who lost his hands and his eye-sight in a dynamite explosion. Being a new Christian he desired to read the Bible. At first he tried using Braille, but the nerve endings in his hands were destroyed and he could not feel the raised characters.

He heard about a lady in England who read Braille with her lips. Hoping to do the same, he discovered the nerve endings in his lips were also deadened by the explosion.

One day, as he brought one of the Braille pages to his lips, his tongue happened to touch a few of the raised characters and he could feel them. He then began to read the Bible using his tongue.

Over a period of sixty-five years spent in darkness, William McPherson read the Bible through **FOUR TIMES** with just his tongue.

God fed His people in the wilderness with manna. Manna was a type of Christ, the Bread from heaven, and a picture of God’s written Word.

- When the manna tasted like **oil** (Num. 11:8), it indicated the people were not right with God.
- When it tasted like **wafers and honey** (Ex. 16:31), it showed they were right with God. What does His Word taste like to you?

“Have ye not read?” Are you reading your Bible? How will you stand before Him and say, “Lord, I didn’t know,” knowing He could look at you and ask, *“Have ye not so much as read?”* (Luke 6:3).

Begin a Bible reading plan. Find yourself a Bible reading partner (outside your family) and make yourself accountable to read the Bible every-day.