

# Practising Spiritual Disciplines



## SCRIPTURE

### *Soul Food • Meditation • Convictions*

The spiritual discipline of scripture reading, more formally known as the spiritual discipline of study, is one that nourishes the heart, mind and soul like food to the body. Just as we would be physically weak without the physical nourishment of food and drink, we are spiritually weak without the spiritual nourishment of reading the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contained in the Bible. Reading Scripture activates the mind, stimulates the soul and warms the heart.

King Solomon's opening words of Proverbs are, in the context of the book, only speaking about the contents and Book of Proverbs. It is, however, equally true and appropriate to apply these words to the entirety of the Bible. Scripture reading is "for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behaviour, doing what is right and just and fair" (Proverbs 1:2-3 *NIV*). Reading Scripture allows us to attain the soul food of wisdom; we meditate on the countless truths and words of wisdom in the Bible; and we are convicted to do what is right, just and fair. Scripture Reading informs our beliefs and actions as Christians. For Salvationists, our first doctrine speaks to this: "We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice." Reading Scripture thoughtfully and prayerfully will drive us to serve as well as meditate on the beautiful words we are reading.

In *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*, Eugene Peterson writes: "Christians don't simply learn or study or use Scripture; we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water, missions into all the world, healing and evangelism and justice in Jesus' name, hands raised in adoration of the Father, feet washed in company with the Son." But we have to study it first; we have to read it first. We have to know Scripture for this assimilation to manifest itself in our faith and practice, our beliefs and actions.

When talking about Scripture reading in her book *Sacred Rhythms*, Ruth Haley Barton says we tend to read the Bible like a textbook, when we should be reading it like a love letter. She writes about "... the longing to hear a word from God that is personal and intimate and takes us deeper into the love that our soul craves." The personal and intimate cravings of our soul can be found in the reading of and listening to Scripture. Scripture reading is as much about listening as it is reading; listening for a word from God through God's Word.

Allowing God's Word to speak for itself is important, too. The notes in study Bibles are good and resourceful, and commentaries are vital for in-depth study into the world and context and meaning of the Bible. But when we read Scripture prayerfully and thoughtfully, we should let it speak for itself and meditate on the exact words we read. Allow the Word to feed your heart, mind and soul.

Scripture reading is a spiritual discipline as well as a gift and a blessing.

### My Action Plan

→ Journal thoughts and themes that stand out.

→ Listen to the audio Bible at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).

→ Follow a Scripture reading plan.

### SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

Cut out and keep in your Bible or journal. Allow these verses to mould your idea of Scripture reading.

"Keep this book of the law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8 *NIV*).

"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2 *NIV*).

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12 *NIV*).

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105 *NIV*).

"Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge" (Proverbs 23:12 *NIV*).

"For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel" (Ezra 7:10 *NIV*).

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:8-9 *NIV*).

Additional one-page study guides at [www.SASpiritualLife.ca](http://www.SASpiritualLife.ca)