

LEARN HOW TO READ BETTER - PT II

5 Remaining Strategies to First Rate Reading

6. Read Imaginatively

- Use different translations. It is an excellent way to stimulate your imagination
- Rewrite the text in your own paraphrase. Use words that make sense to you, it will spark your creativity
- Have someone read the text out loud. The human voice brings life to words on the page
- Change your setting of where you read the Word.
 - For example, many of Jesus' parables were given by the Sea of Galilee, so if you live by a lake or the seashore, consider taking your Bible there to read and reflect on the Lord's teaching.

The idea is to do whatever it takes to see the Word from a different perspective

7. Read Meditatively

- Learn to reflect on what you've read
 - Jos 1:8 (New American Standard Bible): "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."
- Biblical meditation means filling your mind with the truth that God has revealed versus societal meditation which teaches you to empty your mind

8. Read Purposefully

- Scripture serves a purpose. Purposeful reading looks for the aim of the author and our challenge as the reader is to discern that meaning
- Authors communicate their mind through carefully selected grammar such as using:
 - Verbs
 - Subject and object
 - Modifiers (which are descriptive words such as adjectives and adverbs)
 - Connectives (ex. and & but)
 - Types of structure:
 - Geographical (key place)
 - Historical (key events)
 - Chronological (organizes material around key times)
 - Ideological (ideas and concepts which makes it easy to outline a book)

9. Read Acquisitively

- Read not only to receive it but to retain it; not merely to perceive it but possess it
- Have an active involvement in the Word by acting it out with family or friends
- Rewrite the text in your own words
- Get a Bible dictionary and read about cultural and historical backgrounds
- Do whatever it takes to become an inquisitive Bible reader

10. Read Telescopically

- View the parts in light of the whole
 - The Bible is not simply a collection of parts, but it is an integrated message in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts
- Look for the connectives like but, and, and therefore
- Pay attention to the context
 - “What is the big picture?”
- Evaluate the passage
- Look at historical context
- Get the big picture and get an overview of what the writer covers

BONUS MATERIAL:

How to Read “Canonical” Books

There is one very interesting kind of book, one kind of reading, that has not yet been discussed. We use the term “canonical” to refer to such books; in an older tradition we might have called them “sacred” or “holy,” but those words no longer apply to all such works, though they still apply to some of them.

A prime example is the Holy Bible, when it is read not as literature but instead as the revealed Word of God. For orthodox Marxists, however, the works of Marx must be read in much the same way as the Bible must be read by orthodox Jews or Christians. And Mao Tse-tung’s Little Red Book has an equally canonical character for a “faithful” Chinese Communist.

The notion of a canonical book can be extended beyond these obvious examples. Consider any institution—a church, a political party, a society—that among other things (1) is a teaching institution, (2) has a body of doctrine to teach, and (3) has a faithful and obedient membership. The members of any such organization read *reverentially*. They do not—even cannot—question the authorized or right reading of the books that to them are canonical. The faithful are debarred by their faith from finding error in the “sacred” text, to say nothing of finding nonsense there.

REAL TALK FROM THE WORD

Orthodox Jews read the old Testament in this way; Christians, the New Testament; Muslims, the Koran; orthodox Marxists, the works of Marx and Lenin and, depending on the political climate, those of Stalin; orthodox Freudian psychoanalysts, the works of Freud; U.S. Army officers, the infantry manual. And you can think of many more examples by yourself.

In fact, almost all of us, even if we have not quite reached it, have approached the situation in which we must read canonically. A fledgling lawyer, intent on passing the bar exams, must read certain texts in a certain way in order to attain a perfect score. So with doctors and other professionals; and indeed so with all of us when, as students, we were required at the peril of “failure” to read a text according to our professor’s interpretation of it. (Of course, not all professors fail their students for disagreeing with them!)

The characteristics of this kind of reading are perhaps summed up in the word “orthodox,” which is almost always applicable. The word comes from two Greek roots, meaning “right opinion.” These are books for which there is *one and only one right reading*; any other reading or interpretation is fraught with peril, from the loss of an “A” to the damnation of one’s soul. This characteristic carries with it an obligation. The faithful reader of a canonical book *is obliged to make sense out of it* and to find it true in one or another sense of “true.” If he cannot do this by himself, *he is obliged to go to someone who can*. This may be a priest or a rabbi, or it may be his superior in the party hierarchy, or it may be his professor. In any case, he is obliged to accept the resolution of his problem that is offered him. He reads essentially without freedom; but in return for this he gains a kind of satisfaction that is possibly never obtained when reading other books.

Here, in fact, we must stop. The problem of reading the Holy Book—if you have faith that it is the Word of God—is the most difficult problem in the whole field of reading. There have been more books written about how to read Scripture than about all other aspects of the art of reading together. The Word of God is obviously the most difficult writing men can read; but it is also, if you believe it *is* the Word of God, the most important to read. The effort of the faithful has been duly proportionate to the difficulty of the task. It would be true to say that, in the European tradition at least, the Bible is *the* book in more senses than one. It has been not only the most widely read, but also the most carefully read, book of all.

Cited from:

Adler, Mortimer J, and Charles Van. *How to Read a Book*. New York, Simon & Schuster (1972), pp. 293-295.