
“Richer or Poorer”

Imagine yourself in a damp, cold, and dark dungeon prison, chained like a common criminal at the hands of a psychopath ruler. You are hungry and lonely because many of your trusted companions have deserted you and those that are still your friends are having a hard time finding you. Oh, and by the way, you have death looming over you. It is almost unfathomable to imagine anyone else going through such an experience let alone you or me. Under those conditions, I am convinced that the last thing that we would be thinking about is reading anything. Yet, that is exactly what the apostle Paul did while imprisoned. Under those horrible circumstances, Paul requested something warm to wear... “...and his scrolls, especially the parchments” (2 Tim 4:13). In other words, he wanted to read. Paul had tapped into the power of reading and uncovered the benefit that it brings. I contend that Paul sought his parchments (O.T. writings) during that difficult time not only for the comfort and solace found in God’s Word, but also to continue growing richer spiritually even at a time when he knew his end was near (2 Tim 4:6-8). I also contend that he had been doing that long before finding himself in that prison. He discovered and practiced what unfortunately many know but never practice with consistency...the power of reading and growing richer. By the way, I do not mean richer financially or in status (although that will probably happen as a result). Instead I mean richer *spiritually*. I believe that to the degree that a person spends time reading will determine his walk in life and with the Lord. Before I continue, let me clarify one point. There are score of books and resources that we can read that can have a major life changing impact on our lives and all of them are great and should be read. However, I am specifically talking about the one book that can have (and has had) the greatest impact on anyone’s life. It is deserving of our time being sincerely spent reading it, and that is God’s love letter to humanity: the Bible.

The slogan for the “Center for the Book, Library of Congress” reads, “Books give us wings”. Well, if that is the case (and I believe that it is) then the Bible gives us supersonic stealth flight power. There is no other book like it. It contains the greatest message of all time; salvation is through Jesus Christ. (John 3:16, Acts 4:12, 1 Thes. 5:9) It’s a timeless book that is as relevant for us today for righteous living as it was 3,500 years ago. It has life changing power yet so many (who know how to read) never spend any considerable amount of time reading it. Unfortunately, this includes Christians. I call them “self-imposed illiterate” Christians. By the way, if you’ve ever wondered how powerful the life shaping effect of reading the Bible can be then read the following accounts.

Born in a one room cabin in rural Kentucky to basically functionally illiterate parents, this young boy’s formal schooling added up to less than a year but enough to help him learn his ABC’s. His fascination with books pushed him to learn to read so much so that by age seven he was reading the Bible aloud to his mother. Later as an attorney, he became renown for the way that he would argue cases by masterfully illustrating his points by using stories he’d read from the Bible. This poor boy went on to become one of the greatest men in history, Abraham Lincoln.

Although this next individual never attended college and was a business failure twice (first as a farmer and later as part owner of a clothing store), by age 14 he had read the Bible from cover to cover several times. His desire for reading the Bible and many other works provided the rock solid values that equipped him to lead America through the end of WWII and into the prosperous post-war period. I speak of Harry S. Truman.

These are just two examples of how reading the Bible can impact your life and mine. The age old excuse of not having enough time cannot equate to the rich growth that can come from spending time in the Word. Consider this, if the average person is awake for 16 hours a day and spends just 30 minutes reading the Word (and other supplemental spiritual growth development material) then that would be just a 3% investment of time from the entire 16 hour day. Can we afford not to invest just 3% of our daily time to read and grow richer in God’s word by reading the Bible? Sounds pretty ridiculous, doesn’t it? As a Christian, here is the simple truth as it pertains to the time we spend reading or lack thereof: you are either growing richer or poorer. You choose.