



Your Best Investment!

Gaining a blessed and abundant return begins with making the right investment. If you're a new Christian, there is no greater investment you can make into your faith than a regular intake of God's Word. Begin here to help you Read, Understand and Apply it effectively every day. Taken from the book, "Out of This World: A Christian's Guide to Growth and Purpose" by David J. Swandt.

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“Guaranteed Returns!”

In today’s world, this statement raises some eyebrows, and also some suspicions. But there is a universal law that applies to nearly every aspect of life: the law of seed time and harvest, or put more simply, “you reap what you sow.”

You cannot reap a harvest unless you’ve first planted the seeds. You cannot gain a return unless you first invest. You cannot receive the benefits of a product or service unless you first purchase it. You cannot retain physical health without a balanced diet and regular exercise. And with all of these examples, the return received is proportional to the quality or amount given up front.

The same law also applies to our relationship with God. We cannot reap a fulfilled and blessed walk with God unless we sow seed which will produce that harvest. The good news is that God has made good seed readily available to us -

it's called His Word, the Bible. Sowing God's Word generously into our lives guarantees us a bountiful return on that investment.

“Overview of the Bible”

The Bible is filled with timeless principles, clear instruction and relevant examples of living a balanced, fulfilled and blessed life as a Christian. In fact, God’s Word never has, nor ever will become irrelevant, regardless of changing times and seasons, and is available to prepare and equip us to accomplish God’s purpose for our lives.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” **II Timothy 3:16-17**

The Bible can be thought of as an intimate written expression of God, and all that He represents to mankind. Below are some points to help define what this means:

1 - The Bible is God’s tangible expression of love. It speaks of His attributes and character, His communication and commands, and ultimately His full

expression of love for every person that has ever lived.

2 - The Bible is God-breathed. While the 66 books of the Bible were physically written by many authors, each person was directly inspired by God through the Holy Spirit to write what they wrote.

3 - The Bible is God's authority for our lives. Finally, because the Bible is God's "letters" to mankind, and the writings contained within are God-breathed, His Word carries the same authority over our lives as God Himself.

God's Word is one of the most important foundations of our spiritual growth and maturity in God. In order to fully allow the seeds of God's Word to flourish in our lives, we need to plant those seeds by reading it, developing our understanding of it, and then applying it to our lives.

“Read The Bible Regularly”

Most of us would agree that the Bible provides quite a lot of reading material - some of which may seem overwhelming and unclear at times. Here are a few facts about the Bible which will help you navigate through your reading time with a frame of reference and better understanding.

First, you'll find that the Bible is separated into two sections:

The Old Testament is a compilation of writings beginning with the creation of the world, the history of the people of Israel - including their defeat as a nation, the resulting captivity by their enemies, and ultimately their return to occupy Jerusalem once again a few hundred years prior to Christ's birth. The Old Testament is also God's law to the people of Israel.

The New Testament is a compilation of writings beginning just prior to the birth of Jesus, continuing with His life and ministry,

His death and resurrection as our Savior, and ultimately the establishment and expansion of His Church throughout the world. The message of freedom in Christ by grace as revealed in the New Testament fulfills and replaces the need for the rituals imposed in the Old Testament.

Second, and generally speaking, there are three types of writings you'll find throughout the Old and New Testaments in the Bible:

Historical Account - writings which tell a true story and give an important historical perspective of people and important events.

Instructional Writings - books and verses which provide instruction on many aspects of Christian living, church organization and personal and family matters without specifically providing some historical account of events.

Inspirational Writings - poetic, artistic writing designed to encourage, uplift and

express emotion from the author to the reader.

The New Testament writings which provide a Historical Account of the life and ministry of Jesus are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These four books are also referred to as the Gospels. The book of Acts is another historical book in the New Testament which chronicles the establishment and expansion of the Christian church after Jesus' death and resurrection.

The New Testament books which represent Instructional Writings are Romans through Jude. These are actual letters from church leaders giving advice and instruction to other Christians and churches throughout the world.

The Old Testament book of Psalms is a great example of Inspirational Writings. Below is an inspiration from a Psalm which assures us of the blessings God gives to the one who is investing God's Word into their life regularly.

*“But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
He is like a tree planted by streams of
water, which yields its fruit in season and
whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he
does prospers.”* **Psalm 1:2-3**

To plant the seed of God’s Word into our lives, we need to make reading the Bible a part of our daily routine. As the seed of God’s Word blossoms in your life, His blessings will become more evident. You will receive strength from His Word to sustain you, even through seasons of drought and difficulty.

“Expand Your Knowledge”

Developing an understanding of God’s Word is a lifelong endeavor. It won’t just happen overnight. But there are certain approaches which can nurture a more comprehensive understanding. Here are a few thoughts:

- 1 - Obtain some tools. There are several types of study aids available which can help you better understand what you’re reading. For example, there are Study Bibles, concordances, and topical study guides both online and hardcopy.
- 2 - Get involved in a Bible study team or small group to interact with other Christians and observe how others are applying God’s Word to their lives.
- 3 - Have a plan. For those who are really ambitious in their personal reading time, there are several plans available to help guide you through the entire Bible. Many of these can help you get through the entire Bible in a year – and that’s a

noteworthy accomplishment to say the least!

The more you spend time in His Word, the better your understanding of it will become. As you do, you'll also find that God will help you comprehend exactly what you need to know for the season in life that you are in.

“Apply God’s Principles Every Day”

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” **Psalm 119:105**

For Christians, God’s Word provides illuminating power in what at times can be a dark world. God’s Word will only become that source of light if we are open to its truths and allow it to deeply penetrate our lives. Jesus describes this in a parable found in Matthew:

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop - a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” **Matthew 13:3-8**

The seed in the story represents the Bible, and the different conditions of the soil represent our readiness and willingness to receive God's Word. Note that not all of the seed sown by the farmer produced the result he was looking for; only the seed that was sown in the good soil. Read Matthew 13:18-23 for Jesus' explanation of the story. Cultivating "good soil" in our lives means that we allow God's Word to penetrate our thoughts and influence the motives and attitudes of our heart.

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

Hebrews 4:12

And also, our willingness to act on God's Word is central to applying it effectively:

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

James 1:22

By allowing God's Word to penetrate our thoughts and shape our conscience, we can effectively examine our attitudes and motives for the decisions we make every day. When we do so, His Word becomes the most effective guide for living life.

“But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom (God's Word), and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does.” **James 1:25**

Be encouraged to sow the seeds of the Word of God into your life; reading, understanding and applying it every day. A bountiful harvest of blessing awaits you!