

Articles by Art Farstad

Art Farstad

Used by permission, as published on plymouthbrethren.org.
faithalone.org. Logos 21 translation note: Absolutely Free, Inc.

Also online at <https://plymouthbrethren.org/author/52>

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

How to Have an Effective Quiet Time

"What a beautiful service!" is a comment you often hear after a fine public worship gathering. But we shouldn't be solely dependent for our spiritual nourishment on weekly or bi-weekly services at church. We need "Christian"

vitamins every day! It is appalling how many believers don't follow the advice of the (true) chorus:

Read your Bible,

Pray every day,

And you'll grow, grow, grow!

The object of this little study is to share some practical pointers on how to improve the quality and attractiveness of your own personal devotions--your daily "Quiet Time."

The Persons:

You and your Maker!

The Place:

A quiet place, preferably away from all electronic sounds, including the telephone. If you can be outside in a garden, on a hillside, by water, on a mountain--at least sometimes--grab the opportunity! Remember, God started humanity outdoors--in a garden. If, like this writer, you enjoy background music while working, studying, or reading, make this the exception: God deserves your full attention.

The Time:

Morning is best. Jesus met His Father "a long while before day light" (Mark 1:35). A morning "Quiet Time" will steel you for the stresses of the day. If you cannot possibly find time in the morning ("I'm not a morning person"), at least take a few spiritual vitamins, such as reading the day's devotional in Our Daily Bread from Radio Bible Class of

Grand

Rapids. (They're free.)

The Order of Service:

1. A Hymn. Read (or sing, or play and sing, if you can!) a hymn a day. Go through a hymnal, song by song. (You may choose to do Christmas and Easter sections leading up to those days.)

Which hymnal? Use the one your own church uses to start with, unless it is one that has mostly songs that can't stand on their words alone (i.e., just catchy tunes with repeated lines and not much content).

It will take you a year or two to get through a hymnal.

Next, for enrichment, buy or borrow one from a different tradition than your own (but not so different as to be apostate or cultic, obviously!). I recommend, for example, the classic British hymnal, *Hymns Ancient and Modern*.

Keep in mind, however, that nearly every hymnal will need your doctrinal

"filtering." Works for salvation can crop up in the most surprising places!

2. A Devotional Reading. Try a short devotional reading before you get into the Word itself (one based on the Bible, of course!). Some days your regular reading may be in a section of the Bible that isn't immediately applicable to your day--a genealogy, perhaps.

I recommend: Our Daily Bread (Radio Bible Class),
Opened Treasures by Frances Ridley

Havergal (Loizeaux Bros.), One Day at a Time by William McDonald (Everyday

Publications, Toronto, Ontario), and Daily Walk (Walk Thru the

Bible Ministries, Atlanta, GA).

3. The Word of God. Read your

Bible reverently and prayerfully, expecting to find wisdom for that very day. The amount you read is not nearly so important as the meditative attention you give the text that you do read.

Is there a virtue to work on here? A vice to shun? A doctrine that bears study? An example to follow--or not to follow (plenty of rebels and sinners are written up in the OT especially!)?

Read the Bible before you pray, though a short opening prayer for guidance is wise. Let God speak first, then you answer in a simple heart-felt prayer.

4. Prayer. I recommend you keep a

"prayer book"--a little book listing requests and answers, including notations regarding when you began to pray for something and when it was answered. This will encourage you to keep at it. Get a little alphabetized address book that you can slip in your pocket or purse.

Put in your family, friends, yes, your enemies (if any), those in authority in church and state, and pressing needs--finances, health, and the salvation of others.

Have a mix of your own needs and intercessions for others. You may find your prayers for others get answered before your own needs!

5. A Commentary. If you have time you can get some help on hard passages which come up in your daily Bible reading. Some one volume books are good. I recommend: The Bible Knowledge

Commentary (Victor Books) and Believer's Bible

Commentary by

MacDonald (Thomas Nelson).* Both these sets have one volume per

Testament.

Be part of a marvelous minority: Have truly biblical devotions every day!

As one who confessedly at one time let required Bible School studies sometimes "double" as daily "devotions," let me repeat the chorus with emphasis:

Read your Bible,

Pray every day,

And you'll grow, grow, grow!

Read Your Bible!

Many have heard the story of the man whose devotional reading consisted of cracking his Bible at random and reading the first verse his finger touched. One morning this was his verse for the day: "And Judas went out and hanged himself."

That can't be it, he thought. So he tried again. "Go thou and do likewise" was his second hit.

Chagrined, he thought, The third time is a charm! It wasn't. It read:

"What thou doest, do quickly!"

Few of us are as off-base as that man, but since we have a fresh

New Year ahead, let's look at seven ways we can improve our

Bible-reading.

1. Read!

The most obvious advice is: "Just do it!" Millions of Christians don't, and it shows in their attitudes and lifestyles. A Charles Schulz cartoon from the book *Young Pillars* shows a gangling teenager on the phone with his girlfriend. The caption reads: "I'm beginning to unravel the mystery of the

Old Testament; I'm reading it!"

2. Read Prayerfully

You're not reading a secular book or even a great Christian one; you're reading God's inspired message to you. Ask His blessing and the Spirit's enlightenment every time you read.

3. Read Systematically

Read entire books of the Bible, not just snippets. And remember to keep a record of what you've read. Whether you use a one-year system (see *Our Daily Bread* for an example) or a three-year one doesn't matter. Make a commitment to read seven minutes a day to start with.

4. Read Graciously

Don't make Bible-reading a legalistic fetish: "I missed this morning, so everything will go wrong today" or "No Bible, no breakfast." When you're ill, under special pressure, or rushed to leave home, a short passage read with care is worth three chapters rushed through to assuage your conscience!

This is God's love letter to His people and when cynics read it to ridicule or find fault they're reading someone else's mail!

(If you're one of those, dear reader, do keep reading, but look for God's grace in Christ, not faults!)

5. Read Attentively

A liberal New Testament scholar admitted on his death bed that he

"had never read the New Testament with attention"

(although, no doubt, he had read with attention many scholarly books and articles about the New Testament). Let's not be guilty of such a cavalier handling of God's Word. Shut off all the world, especially radio, TV, records, CDs, and tapes, and give the King your undivided attention.

Visualize the historical narratives, meditate on the poetry, and apply the exhortations.

6. Read Expectantly

As you search for wisdom to live each day, continue your reading for that day until you find it. God will speak through His Word!

7. Read Joyfully

Our pioneer ancestors laboriously traced out God's words in big family Bibles. It showed in their stable and righteous lives. We ought to give the Bible that kind of respect.

Keep reading and eventually you will enjoy the Bible. It will gradually change from the "branflakes" stage (dry but nourishing) to the "peaches-and-cream" stage ("Hey, I'm enjoying this!").

Maybe you're just not a book person, but by all means be a Book person.

The late Dr. John Mitchell, a graduate of Dallas Seminary's first class and long-time professor at Multnomah School of the Bible in

Portland, Oregon, used to lecture students when their ignorance of some text surfaced. He would say with his Scottish burr,

"Don't you fellas ever read you Bi-bles?"

I pass on his fatherly command to those who didn't have the privilege of sitting under his ministry: "Read you Bi-bles!"

The Bible and the Presidents

February is a presidential month for historically-minded Americans. And rightly so. Our first and truly great President! George Washington, was born in February (Feb. 11, 1732, "Old

Style" calendar, Feb. 22 "New Style"). So too was Abraham Lincoln, perhaps our greatest and most beloved President of all (Feb. 12, 1809).

Their respective birthdays have been holidays in most states--or at least one of them was. Now it's "President's Day"--and it's supposed to include all of the Presidents.

The office of President of the United States has become a very powerful one. People are influenced--no matter how much they may complain and deny it--by what these men--some great, some weak, and some mediocre say and do.

The Grace Evangelical Society is interested in God's Word--its teachings, and its application to everyday life. A very large percentage of U.S. Presidents, whether definitely known to be believers or not, have said and written some very worthwhile things about our favorite Book.

I have chosen remarks on the Bible from a handful of Presidents during the 3 centuries in which there have been Presidents of the United States.

Eighteenth Century

George Washington (1789-97)

"Above all, the pure and benign light of Revelation has had a meliorating influence on mankind, and increased the blessings of society."

Nineteenth Century

John Quincy Adams (1825-29)

"The first and almost the only book deserving of universal attention is the Bible. I speak as a man of the world . . . and I say to you, 'Search the Scriptures.'"

Andrew Jackson (1829-37)

Upon hearing a man defaming God's Word, Jackson rebuked him with the following well-chosen words:

"Sir, that Book is the Rock on which our Republic rests!"

Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865)

Lincoln had devout Christian parents but apparently didn't become a believer till the darkest days of the Civil War. As a boy he read the Bible so much that his style was ever after heavily influenced by the King James Version. The following quotation is no doubt from the period before he found his faith:

"I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible.

Take all of this book upon reason that you can and the balance by faith, and you will live and die a better man."

Ulysses S. Grant (1869-77)

Grant was a man of integrity.

As he was dying of cancer he wrote his memoirs, not for prestige, but so as not to leave his family in debt. He

finished in time; the royalties saved the family from financial ruin. Grant wrote:

"Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties; write its precepts on your hearts and practice them in your lives.

To the influence of this book we are indebted for the progress made, and to this we must look as our guide in the future."

Twentieth Century

William McKinley (1897-1901)

President McKinley was a genuine believer in Christ. His words are sorely needed by our currently biblically illiterate, "Christian-bashing"

culture:

"The more profoundly we study this Book and the more closely we observe its divine precepts, the better citizens we will become and the higher will be our destiny as a nation."

Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09)

"Almost every man who by his life-work added to the sum of human achievement of which the race is proud, of which our people are proud, almost every such man has based his life-work largely upon the teachings of the Bible."

Herbert Clark Hoover (1929-33)

It was Hoover's misfortune to be presiding over the Nation when the great stock market crash took place, though he was not responsible for it. Hoover did much to help the world's needy between the World Wars.

"Whether it be of the law, business, morals, or that vision which leads the imagination in the creation of constructive enterprises for the happiness of mankind, he who looks for guidance in any of these things may look inside its covers and find illumination."

We have read just a few presidential quotations--powerful men speaking of the powerful Book. If we had more space the list could be augmented at least fourfold.

Since our

Newsletter has British Commonwealth readers as well as U.S., let's have a royal quotation for our Canadian and other Commonwealth friends:

King George V (ruled 1910-36)

His words are greatly needed in the British world today:

"It is my confident hope that my subjects may never cease to cherish their noble inheritance in the English Bible, which, in a secular sense, is the first of national treasures and is, in its spiritual significance, the most valuable thing that this world affords."

Having dealt with men of power sufficiently, I would like to close with a few lines from one of North America's finest men of poetry:

We search the world for truth, we cull

The good, the pure, the beautiful,

From graven stone and written scroll,

From the old flower-fields of the soul,

And, weary seekers for the best,

We come back laden from our quest,

To find that all the sages said
Is in the Book our mothers read.
-John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-92)

Logos 21, Gospel of John: A Word about the Translation and Text

A Word about the Translation and Text

Logos 21 is translated from The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text, edited by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2d ed., 1985). Logos is the Greek word for word (see John 1:1) and the 21 means we are seeking to bring that word, or message from God, into the 21st century. John wrote his Gospel in everyday language (koiné or common Greek). Our translation is modern, easy to read, and yet an accurate representation of his original. Where English usage allows, the translation is fairly literal; where it does not, a freer rendering is used. In Logos 21, italics show emphasis. What is emphasized is often clear in Greek by word order or other means, but not obvious in English without occasional italics. Logos 21 also uses italics for foreign words (such as *rabboni*) and to indicate direct quotations from the Old Testament. Whereas most modern versions are based on a text heavily influenced by scholars who have largely disregarded or discounted the majority of Greek manuscripts, Logos 21 represents the vast bulk of existing Greek manuscripts. It is similar to the traditional text used by William Tyndale (1526) and the King James translators (1611), but corrected by later finds. The Majority Text used here represents from 80-95% of our Greek manuscripts. These stem largely from the areas which first received the original Gospels and Epistles (modern Greece and Turkey). On the whole, these manuscripts have a remarkable agreement among

themselves. Heavy reliance on the few older manuscripts, mostly from Egypt (the region dry enough to preserve ancient papyrus), seems unwarranted to us. These manuscripts, often called "Alexandrian," have many discrepancies between them. Also, no New Testament book, as far as we know, was originally sent to Egypt, the area where these manuscripts likely originated. Those who wish to pursue this subject further should read Wilbur Pickering's *The Identity of the New Testament Text*, 2d ed. 1977; and Harry A. Sturz's *The Byzantine Text Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*, 1984, both from Thomas Nelson Publishers. Also, for further information write to: The Executive Secretary, The Majority Text Society, Box 141289, Dallas, TX 75214-1289, U.S.A. Notes on the Text Except for "Amen, amen," verses marked * are places where there is a significant variation between the Majority Text, which we follow, and the so-called "critical text," abbreviated "NU." NU is an abbreviation for the Greek text published in Nestle-Aland's 27th edition and the United Bible Societies' 4th edition (virtually identical texts, different apparatuses [footnotes]). In each case, the reading in Logos 21 has the support of a large majority of manuscripts.