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## PROMOTING LOVE FOR THE BIBLE.

WE have received the following letter, whose reverent and earnest spirit deserves the most helpful response that can be given :

"I was not converted until middle life, about seven years ago. I know that I am a child of God, though He had to send severe chastisement before I would submit to His will. I have one great trouble, I do not love to read and meditate in the Bible as I should. I really cannot take pleasure in planning and practicing a course of reading each day. I love the Psalms, and there are portions of the New Testament that seem like gold to me, so forcibly have they come to my help when in some spiritual darkness or trouble. But the Old Testament as a whole, I do not enjoy. I have many cares that I cannot throw off. Do you think an earlier conversion is more favorable for Bible study? Please tell me how to become interested in it."

The Bible is not one book, but many. These appeared at different times through twenty-five centuries. In the periods in which and for the purposes for which they were given they were of the greatest importance to God's people. Some treat of matters whose value to the present age is to show how the different dispensations prepare the way for and support each other until the perfect revelation in Christ recorded in the New Testament. No person, therefore, unless a professional student, can be equally interested in all parts of the Bible. What the Jews in the time of Moses were allowed or forbidden to eat is not of importance to us as a rule of life; and this is true of a thousand details in every stage of Jewish history. The instruments, weapons and utensils used in those days come under the same head. Even in spiritual things different passages will attract one disciple more than the same passages will interest another equally spiritually-minded. Some are reached chiefly through the reason, others through the feelings, others most powerfully impressed through the imagination.

Parts of the Bible are as dry as the driest dust that ever blew across the deserts of Arabia. There are Psalms and parts of Psalms that Mr. Wesley excluded from the prayer book that he prepared, on the ground that they "are not suited to the mouths of a Christian congregation." But we believe that every part of the Holy Scriptures has been preserved for some purpose by direction of God. Even the driest parts of the Bible are interesting when one first perceives the purpose which the writer had in view.

Consider the Bible as a library of sixty-six books composed under the order of God, preserved by His providence; all important in their time, and of value still for the particular object of their preservation, but do not try to become equally interested in the whole library. To attempt this will result in self-deception or in the loss of sensibility.

Nevertheless, it is desirable that you should acquire a general familiarity with the whole of the Bible. These hints may aid you: First, you need a good commentary. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's is such. A new edition of the Annotated Paragraph Bible, of the American Tract Society, is just out. Whedon's Commentary, published by the Methodist Book Concern, is excellent. Read each book of the Bible once. When you cannot understand consult the commentary.

It would require only fifty-six hours to read the Bible through aloud. Were you to give an average of fifteen minutes a day to it, you would go through the whole in less than eight months. It will help you in becoming acquainted with several of the books to read each one of them at a sitting, especially the shortest. You will come to many beautiful spiritual remarks, promises of God suited to trouble; for He is the same through every age, and the wants of a devout soul are the same. Mark those passages. If you use a Bible with marginal references, be particular when you find in the Old Testament a reference to the New Testament to look at that. Having once gone through the Bible in this way, you will have a general knowledge of it.

We would *not* advise this kind of reading in connection with private devotions.

Whenever you hear a sermon preached, as soon as possible turn to the text and read the chapter containing it. If the lessons of the day are peculiarly interesting, and you are not familiar with them, do the same. Always endeavor to find passages that will be useful in your devotions. Copy these into a book. In reading such a collection as the Psalms it is not necessary to do this, but only in perusing those books that seem most devoid of interest. An example from Nahum—not a promising book for comforting words—may show what diamonds are to be found in unexpected streams of inspiration: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him" (chapter i, 7). The Book of Zephaniah is one of the least known and least read, but in it are four of the most beautiful and touching passages ever inspired by God into the human soul; enough, if the rest of the Scriptures were lost, to furnish a rule for life, and consolation for every trial. Your little book will grow more valuable to you each year.

While reading for devotion, you should look for passages according with your spiritual needs. A person might as wisely go into a restaurant without regard to his appetite, and call for articles of food at random, or tell the waiter to bring anything he pleases; or into the drug store and drink from the first medicine bottle, as to use the Bible for devotional purposes in the way that many do. They know that they ought to read the Bible, and without thought they read either by course or at random. Far better would it be to spend the time searching for what the soul feels the need of, if it were only one verse, than to read thirty merely for the purpose of going through so much Bible. Observe these things, and there will be no dullness of spirit in prayer; the dead formula that you may have been in the habit of repeating will give place to living supplication, supported by a promise that meets the longings of your spirit. If you have not been in the habit of formality the new promise searched out, or the new direction complied with, will give new life, fervency, and therefore effectuality to prayer.—*Christian Advocate.*