

LESSON TWELVE

CHAPTER XII
BIBLE READINGS

You are required to prepare an outline using the method from this chapter. You will need to submit your outline and have it accepted by the college before taking the test for this Lesson. Dr. VBK

CHAPTER XII.

BIBLE READINGS.

Concisely stated, the difference between a Bible Reading and a textual sermon lies in this: that the former consists in the compilation of a greater or less number of Scripture passages, and their comparison one with another; while the latter usually consists in the exposition of a single text.

I. ADVANTAGES OF A BIBLE READING OVER THE TEXTUAL SERMON.

1. For the Preacher Himself.

a) *It is simpler and easier.*

The complexity so characteristic of the textual sermon is, for the most part, absent in the Bible Reading. Multifarious divisions and minute analysis are not, usually, required. It is, therefore, a good style of preaching for the beginner in homiletics to adopt.

b) *It prevents mind-wandering.*

The preacher is not confined to a single text. He cannot very well be accused of the fault into which the old colored preacher is said to have fallen, namely, that of taking a text, then of departing from it, and finally, of not coming back to it.

c) *It helps to keep the preacher biblical.*

It is possible in the preparation of a textual sermon to read the Bible for the text, then to close it, and not

look at it again during the preparation of the sermon. This is hardly possible in the preparation of a Bible Reading, for one is compelled to constantly turn from one part of the Bible to another. Scripture must be compared with scripture. To do this means to become a biblical preacher.

d) Is has the tendency to prevent one-sided views of Bible truths.

One can scarcely fail to get a full-orbed view of the truth selected for the Bible Reading so long as he is compelled to search from one end of the Bible to the other for his sermon material. He will have a clear conception of the "analogy of faith."

2. Advantages with Reference to the People.

a) By this style of preaching the people will continually be instructed in divine truth.

They will be likely to know much more of God's Word and will than by listening to textual sermons only. It may truly be said that there is a sad lack of Bible instruction in the average sermon. Very often the only biblical thing about the sermon is the text. If the sermonizing of the past few years had had a much greater supply of Bible instruction in it, the number of people who have left our churches and joined some of the misleading and erroneous sects, would have been far less.

b) It keeps the people in a spirit of constant expectancy.

They will be wondering what is in reserve; they will be desirous of knowing what phase of the truth is to be presented next. This, in itself, is of great advantage to the preacher.

H. HELPS NEEDED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF BIBLE READINGS

1. A Concordance.

Among concordances Cruden's stands first and foremost for those who study the Bible in English only, and have no knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. Strong's, Young's, and the *Englishman's Greek Concordance*, may be used very effectively by those who have a very little knowledge of the Greek. Indeed, if one knows but the Greek and Hebrew alphabet he can use these works with great profit, and with much advantage over Cruden's.

2. A Topical Text Book.

There are two kinds of such books: one in which the topics are arranged in their logical order, irrespective of their order in the Bible; the other, contains the topics according to their order in the Bible. Inglis' *Bible Text Cyclopaedia* is a good illustration of the latter; Torrey's *Topical Text Book* of the former. Each one has its own particular advantage; both should be in the possession of the preacher.

3. Word Lists.

By these are meant such lists of topics and subjects as will be found at the back of the ordinary teacher's Bible.

4. A Good, Well-bound Reference Bible.

This, while mentioned last, is the most important. What is the best reference Bible? Opinions differ. One Bible teacher likes one kind, another prefers some other. There is as much difference among Bible teachers with reference to the best edition of the Bible as there is among music teachers touching the best make of pianos.

Ed. Note: We do not recommend that you ever use the Revised Version because it is an inferior translation.

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Any of the standard editions of the Bible are good: the Bagster, Oxford, Nelson. It is good to have a Revised Version as well as the Authorized Version to which you may continually refer. Some things are much clearer in the Revised Version than in the King James Version.

III. **THE PLAN AND METHOD OF CONSTRUCTING BIBLE READINGS.**

Having chosen the theme for the Bible Reading—the rules for which are the same as those which enter into the choice of a text for a textual sermon (see p. 28) proceed in the following manner:

1. Find Out the Teaching of the WHOLE Bible on the Subject Chosen.

The Bible must be searched from Genesis to Revelation in order to obtain a full and complete view of the subject under consideration. Only thus may oneness and hobby-riding be avoided. If we are to declare the whole counsel of God to the people we must know the whole counsel, and in order to know it we must know what the whole Bible says about it. This means that in preparing a Bible Reading on "Faith," for example, we must look up not only all that is to be found under the word "faith," but also what is recorded under the synonyms for faith, such as "belief," "believe," "receive," "trust," etc. This does not mean, of course, that one must read the Bible through from beginning to end in order to do this. The concordance may be used for this purpose.

2. Prepare Sheets of Paper with Appropriate Headings.

Prepare four or five sheets of blank paper. On the top of the first sheet write the question, "What?"; on

the second, "Why?"; the third, "How?"; the fourth, "What then?" More sheets of paper may be used as the needs of the case may require.

3. Now Take the Concordance, Which We Will Suppose in This Case is Cruden's, and Turn to the Word "Faith."

The first thing you find under this word is a number of definitions of the word. Various kinds of faith are mentioned, such as, historical, temporary, justifying faith, etc. These definitions, with their accompanying references, may be written down on the sheet of paper marked, "What?" This is for the purpose of defining the subject.

Coming more particularly to the work of the concordance proper: reading down the column you come, for example, to Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for," etc. You have here a definition of faith. Now write on the sheet marked "What?" the following: Hebrews 11:1—"Faith is the substance," etc. Reading further in the concordance you come to Hebrews 11:6—"Without faith it is impossible to please God." Where shall we put this?—on what sheet? under what heading? Under "Why?" because it shows the necessity for having faith. Reading again, we come to Romans 10:17, "Faith cometh by hearing," etc. This verse may be written on the sheet marked "How?" for it shows how faith may be obtained. Proceed in this way until you have finished every reference in the column of the concordance. The synonyms must then be examined and dealt with in the same way. Thus a thorough grasp of the subject as set forth in the whole Bible is obtained.

A word or two with reference to the use of the other concordances mentioned above may be helpful at this point. Let us take a glance at Strong's, for example.

As one allows his eye to pass from quotation to quotation in the column on "faith," he quickly observes that by the side of each reference there is a number which refers him to a glossary at the back of the book. He observes, further, that different numerals are placed opposite the various references, thus indicating that in the original the word is not just exactly the same in meaning. For instance, in looking up the meaning of the word "faith" in Romans 14:22—"Hast thou faith?" one is surprised to find that the word here used does not mean "faith" in the generally accepted sense of that word, at all,—that is, it does not mean saving faith, nor even that faith that lays hold of the promises of God, but simply "persuasion," thus making, "Hast thou faith?" read, "Art thou persuaded?" Such an understanding of the words in the texts used is very important in order to a true presentation of the doctrine.

IV. BY WAY OF SUGGESTION AND CAUTION.

1. Do Not Use Too Many Texts of Scripture.

No infallible rule can be laid down as to the number of Scripture passages to be used in any one Bible Reading. Only the most striking and representative passages should be chosen. The length of comment made on each passage, together with the amount of time at the disposal of the speaker, will determine the number. Examine outlines of Bible Readings on pp. 169-176.

2. Be Careful to Arrange the Texts in Their Logical Order.

Let progress in thought mark the order and arrangement of the references. The transition from one thought to another should be natural, not forced or strained.

3. Explain Each Passage or Group of Passages Carefully.

No pains should be spared in the minute analysis of each word in each verse chosen as a proof-text. Be sure to understand just what the text teaches. Let the explanation be such as the audience can readily understand. See under "Interpretation of the Text," p. 39.

4. Be Sure to Illustrate Each Point.

This is essential to the effectiveness of a Bible Reading, even more so than in the case of a textual sermon. As a rule, use Bible illustrations. There is an abundance of them, and they illustrate Bible truths far better than illustrations taken from books of stock illustrations.

5. Limit the Subject.

If your subject deals with a theme as large as "faith," for example, it is well to take up only a certain phase of it. Do not try to cover the entire subject. Different aspects of "faith" may be presented, viz.: justifying faith; the faith that claims the promises, etc.

For illustrative Bible Readings, see pp. 169-176.