

Treasuring God's Word as Our Heritage

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Part One: Thus saith the Lord

I. What does the Bible say about the Bible?

A. Read the following passages and determine what it says about the Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 12:32

Isaiah 8:19-20

Matthew 2:3-6

John 5:38-39

John 10:34-36

John 14:26

John 17:17

Romans 3:2

I Corinthians 2:1-16

Ephesians 2:20

II Timothy 3:14-17

Hebrews 11:1

I Peter 1:10-12

II Peter 1:16,20-21

II Peter 3:7

Revelation 22:18-19

What do we mean when we say the Bible is "verbally inspired"?

Which is better?

The Bible *is* the Word of God.

The Bible *contains* the Word of God.

B. What do the following passages teach us about how to study the Bible?

Deuteronomy 6:6-8

John 5:39

Acts 17:11

II Timothy 3:14-17

I Peter 2:2-3 (I Corinthians 3:1-2; Hebrews 5:11-14)

Oftentimes people say that they have too many "problems" studying the Bible. List three "problems" and give the Bible's solution to the problem.

Problem #1

Bible's solution

Problem #2

Bible's solution

Problem #3

Bible's solution

II. Reading and Interpreting your Bible

A. What "method" of interpretation does Scripture itself give to us?

Luke 24:13-35 (especially verse 27)

Matthew 4:1-11

II Timothy 4:1-5

Matthew 1:22

B. Distinguishing between Law and Gospel.

1. What is the purpose of the Law?

Romans 3:19-20

I Timothy 1:8-10

Psalm 119:105

2. What is the purpose of the Gospel?

Romans 1:16-17; 3:21-24

John 3:16-18

3. Exercising what we have learned: Determine whether these passages are Law or Gospel:

Proverbs 22:6

James 2:10

Galatians 3:10

Isaiah 57:1

Isaiah 59:2

Galatians 3:13

Matthew 11:28-30

Romans 8:1

James 3:17

Romans 6:23

John 4:26

III. Distinguishing between prescriptive and descriptive sections of Scriptures.

A. Definitions

1. A *prescriptive* section of the Bible will dictate or command what we are to do or not do. We obey these sections of Scripture as the commands of our God.

2. A *descriptive* section of the Bible describes an event or situation that took place. While we can learn important lessons from these parts of Scripture, they are not to be taken as commands of God to us.

B. Determine whether these passages are prescriptive or descriptive:

John 13:34-35

I Corinthians 11:3-10

Malachi 3:10

I Corinthians 14:33b-40

Matthew 1:18-19

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 6:1-4

Titus 1:5-9

Colossians 2:16-17

Mark 10:21

Joshua 2:4-6

John 6:40

Matthew 5:38-42

IV. Always look for the Redemptive Value in Scripture

A. What is the purpose of the Bible?

John 5:39-40

John 20:30-31

Revelation 22:16-21

B. Note how Jesus is the central focus of Scripture:

Luke 24:13-35

Acts 2:32,36

Acts 7:52

Acts 8:35

John 5:39

V. Note the theme and the context of the book or section of Scriptures.

- A. It is vital to understand what the theme or purpose of each section of Scripture is. Some people have taken fact as fiction, parables as true stories and visions as literal happenings because they didn't note the theme and the purpose of the section of Scripture they were reading.

Determine whether the following are: Vision, Parable, Fact or Fiction:

Revelation 5:1-5

Matthew 18:12-14

Exodus 14:21-22

Matthew 18:15-18

Luke 16:19-31

Jonah 1:1-2

Acts 10:9-13

- B. Always read Scripture in its context. Reading of Scripture in its context is vital, for the context determines the meanings of the passages and even the words.

What does the context tell us about these often misused passages?

Revelation 3:20

Revelation 20:1-4

Matthew 16:18

Matthew 7:1

James 2:17

Mark 10:17-19

Galatians 3:28

VI. Bible Study helps

- A. Study Bibles
- B. Concordances
- C. Commentaries
- D. Encyclopedias/Dictionaries

Part Two: Where did Luther stand?

I. Why study the Bible

- A. The Bible is Word of God.

You are not reading the word of a human being but the Word of God, the Most High. He desires pupils who diligently note and observe what He says. Moreover, if it is well said that the letters of princes should be read three times because they must speak with deliberation in order not to be considered fools, how much more necessary it is for one to read the letters of God, that is, the Holy Scriptures, three, four, ten, a hundred, a thousand, and many thousand times. For God speaks with deliberation and weight, nay, He is the eternal Wisdom itself. Whoever does this becomes better and more learned from Scriptures. Whoever does not do so earns nothing, nay, becomes the worse for it. (Notes on Matthew 24:15, Plass, *What Luther Says*)

One should have a pure faith, one that believes nothing that is not grounded in Scripture. All that we are to believe, aye, more than enough, is in Scripture. (From a Christmas sermon on Luke 2:33-40, Plass)

Luther comments on this passage that the Holy Scripture is “inspired and taught by God Himself” (II Peter 1: 21). And to have this faith in Scripture as God’s own Word is to Luther part of our Christian faith. “Oh, if we could only believe that God Himself is speaking to us in the Scripture!” In all of this Luther shows how completely he rejects the popular contemporary idea that the Bible is merely a human book. It is a human book, but much more, since the men whom God chose to write it were under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and were “moved” by Him as they wrote. Hence it is also a divine Book, “the *verbum Dei* infallible,” as Luther calls it. Since it is God’s Word and since God is speaking through it, Luther can come to no other conclusion than that it is infallible, without error. In fact, he makes no problem of this. He takes it for granted, taking Scripture’s own testimony at face value. With this article of faith, together with the fact that Scripture is “the manger in which Christ lies,” we can understand Luther’s utter dependence upon Scripture as the absolute truth, the final and absolute authority.

This did not mean that to Luther the Bible was a static sort of encyclopedia, a musty sourcebook where he could find the answer to all questions. No, the written Word like the preached Word, is the dynamic and powerful Word of God which is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12). It is the power of God whether it is written or spoken, read or heard. Luther condemns those who call the written Word a dead thing. He railed against the spirits “swarming everywhere...who regard Scripture as a dead letter, extolling nothing but the spirit and yet keeping neither the Word nor the spirit. But there you hear how St. Paul uses Scripture as his strongest witness and shows that there is nothing solid to support our doctrine and faith except the material or written Word, put down in letters and preached verbally by him and others; for there it is clearly stated. ‘Scripture, Scripture.’” (Preus, Hermann. *A Theology to Live By*. St. Louis. CPH 1977, p.137-138)

Therefore, he says, it is necessary to “listen to and to read the Word, which is the vehicle of the Holy Spirit. When the Word is read, the Holy Spirit is present; and thus it is impossible either to listen to or to read Scripture without profit.” (*Ibid.*, p. 138)

Luther then quotes John 20: 31 (“These are written that you may believe”) and explains: “Accordingly we should know that God’s testimony does not come to us except through the spoken Word or through Scripture.” The apostle too bears witness to the Scripture as the “living Word”: “Till I come, attend to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, to teaching” (I Tim. 4:13). (*Ibid.*)

B. Christ Himself tells us to study the Scriptures.

We should and must by all means read Scripture. For it was put into letters and was constantly preserved in the church through the special dispensation of God (and will also remain in the church until the end of the world) that we might read, learn, and constantly further and spread the Word on and on, to children’s children. Now we at all times find disciples and pupils enough who read and study in the Scriptures and so grow in their understanding that in the course of time they are able also to instruct others from it. But the matter of greatest importance is that the readers of Scripture are not only diligent but also faithful. This is what the Lord means here when He says: “How readest thou?” What do you learn? He says in effect: See to it that you by all means read Scripture faithfully and that you rightly divide the Word of truth, that is, that you look for nothing in it for your person except Me, without whom no one comes to the Father, and that from Scripture you teach this to others. For there are many who seek their personal interests in the Word, namely, how to

obtain temporal goods and honor by it and how to enjoy a great reputation in the world, considering godliness a trade, as St. Paul says (I Tim. 6:5). But woe to these. (Plass, p. 82)

C. Bible study affords personal growth.

That he cares best for his own soul who is completely immersed in the quickening and saving fountain of the Word of God, no one better knew than our Luther. We know what drove him into the monastery; he wanted to find rest for his soul. What did he first seek for there? “When I went into the monastery,” he himself relates, “I asked for a Bible and the brethren gave me one.” (Nebe, August. Philadelphia: *Lutheran Publication Society*, 1894, p. 17)

Whoever would know God and have eternal life should read this Book with diligence and search for its testimony of Christ, God’s Son. (Plass, p. 80)

For him who believes and keeps Christ’s Word heaven stands open and hell is locked. The devil is also taken captive, sin is forgiven, and the believer is a child of life eternal. This is taught by this Book, Holy Scripture, and by no other book on earth. For this reason let him who would live forever study in it diligently. He who does not do so and does not want to do so is and remains in death eternal. (Plass, p. 82)

When the devil finds me idle and unarmed, not heeding God’s Word, he works on my conscience that I have taught wrong, and stirred up by my doctrine much offence and division, compared with the former state of the Church, which was still and peaceful. I cannot deny I am often in depression and anguish on this account; but when I grasp the Word of God, I have won the battle. (*Watchwords for the Warfare or Life: from Doctor Martin Luther*. London: T Nelson and Sons, 1887. p. 69)

Since the written Word of Scripture is the living Word of God, Luther’s logical conclusion is that we must constantly be occupied with the Word, reading it, hearing it, remembering it, meditating upon it. “It is an exceedingly effectual help against the devil, the world, and the flesh and all evil thoughts to be occupied with the Word of God, and to speak of it, and meditate upon it...Undoubtedly, one will not start a stronger incense or other fumigation against the devil than by being engaged upon God’s commandments and words...For this is indeed the true holy water and holy sign from which he flees, and by which he may be driven away.” For this reason alone, we ought to “read, speak, think and treat of these things.” In other words, there is nothing more important for the Christian for the sanctification of life than to meditate upon the Word of God in Scripture. God Himself enjoins us (in Deut. 6: 6 ff.) “That we should always meditate upon His precepts, sitting, walking, standing, lying down, and rising, and have them before our eyes and in our hands as a constant mark and sign.” This is the way the Holy Spirit accomplishes our sanctification. “At whatever hour, then, God’s Word is taught, preached, heard, read or meditated upon, there the person, day, and work are sanctified...because of the Word.” Meditation on the Word is sure to bear fruit, because “such is the efficacy of the Word, whenever it is seriously contemplated, heard, and used, that it is bound never to be without fruit, but always awakens new understanding, pleasure, and devoutness, and produces a pure heart and pure thoughts. For these words are not inoperative or dead, but creative, living words. “ Here again is a theology to live by. (Preus, p. 138-139)

D. Bible study enables us to both defend and proclaim our faith.

We shall have to acknowledge here that St. Peter addressed these words to all Christians, clergy and laity, male and female, young and old of whatever state or condition they may have been. It follows that every Christian should know the ground of, and reason for, his faith and be able to maintain and defend it if necessary. But up to this time reading the Scripture has been forbidden the laity. For the devil hit upon a fine trick when he schemed to tear people away from Scripture. He thought: If I can keep the laity from reading the Scripture, I shall then bring the priests from the Bible into Aristotle so that, gossip what they will, the laity must hear whatever they preach to them. Otherwise, if the laity were to read Scripture, the priests would also have to study it in order not to be rebuked and refuted. But look now at what St. Peter here tells us all: We should give answer and show reason for our faith. When you are about to die, I shall not be with you; neither will the pope. If you then do not know the ground of your hope but merely say: I will believe as the councils, the pope, and the fathers have believed, the devil will answer. Yes, but what if they were in error? Then he has won and will drag you down to hell. Therefore we must know what we believe, namely, what God's Word is, not what the pope and the holy fathers believe or say. For you must place no confidence whatever in any person, but in the bare Word of God. (Luther's comments on I Peter 3:15, Plass, p. 79)

II. How did Luther study the Bible?

A. General Principles

1. He studied with the purpose of seeing Christ in the Scriptures.

We are to search, says He, not to sit in judgment; not to be masters, but pupils; not to inject our notions into Scripture, but get Christ's testimony out of it; as long as Christ is not found aright in it, it is also not being searched aright. (Plass, p. 80)

Let the Holy Spirit Himself read this Book to His own if He desires to be understood. For it does not write about men or about making a living, as all the other books do, but about the fact that God's Son was obedient to His Father for us and fulfilled His will. Whoever does not need this wisdom should let this Book lie; it does not benefit him anyway. It teaches another and eternal life, of which reason knows nothing and is able to comprehend nothing. Let him, then, who would study in this Book make up his mind to look for nothing in it except that of which the psalm speaks: that the Son of God willingly and obediently became a burnt offering for us in order to appease God's wrath. (Luther speaking on Psalm 40, Plass, p. 81)

He who would read the Bible must carefully see to it that he does not err; for it is indeed possible to stretch and lead Scripture. But let no one lead it according to his personal inclination, but lead it to the fountain, that is, to the Cross of Christ. Then he will certainly not fail but will hit the mark. This one thing preach: the wisdom of the cross, that is, that man is nothing and can do nothing and thus learns to despair of himself and hope in Christ. (Plass, p. 82)

2. He read the Bible literally.

What I have advised elsewhere I here repeat and shall advise again: the Christian reader should devote his first effort to searching for what is called the literal sense. It alone is the entire substance of faith and Christian theology; it alone holds its own in tribulation and

temptation and gains the victory over the gates of hell, together with sin and death, and triumphs to the praise and glory of God. But allegory is often uncertain and unreliable and very unsafe as a prop for faith, since it often depends upon human conjecture and opinion. If anyone leans on that, he is leaning on the reed of Egypt. (Plass, p. 80)

Such are all who seek to approve their own empty opinion by the authority of Scripture, Judaizing with Jewish treachery. Against these blessed Hilary, *De Trinitate, I, 18*, says: “The best reader is the one who looks for the understanding of the words from the words themselves, rather than imposing his own understanding, and takes something out, rather than bringing something in, and does not force the words to seem to contain what he had assumed must be understood before reading.” Hence the Lord complains through Malachi (cf. Mal. 3:8) that evil and perverse interpreters stab Him and do violence to Him. In deed, their own sayings are like goads and nails, says Eccl. 12:11, whereby, when the truth is forbidden, the Lord is pierced, so that the truth may not freely move and be seen. (*Luther’s Works*, 10:18 (First Psalm Lectures))

3. He read the Bible in its context.

But this is what happens to dull readers and to those who bring their own thoughts to the reading of holy Writ, whereas they ought to come with empty minds and get their thought out of Holy Writ. Then they should weigh the words carefully, comparing that which has preceded with that which follows, and be intent on capturing the real meaning of any passage and not on fabricating their own dreams after mutilating the vocables or tearing away words. (Plass, p. 80)

B. Specific Suggestions

1. The secret to effective meditation.

The secret of effective meditation lies in the believer’s confidence that through the Word he is reading or recalling what God is speaking to him. Luther had a double-barreled formula: *Deus dixit* and *Deus loquens*, God has spoken, and God is still speaking through His Word. And this is a dynamic, Spirit-filled speaking. For when God speaks to us He comes to us in the very Word He is speaking. When we believe the Word He speaks, we believe Him. When we put our faith in what He says, we are putting our trust in Him. There can be no talk of faith in God apart from faith in what He says. *Gegraptai* means “it stands written.” Everything Jesus said and did was “according to the Scriptures.” Everything the apostles preached, they preached “according to the Scriptures.” Everything the church believes, it believes “according to the Scriptures.” (Preus, p. 141-142)

2. Luther’s three steps.

To begin with, it is absolutely certain that one cannot enter into the (meaning of) Scripture by study or innate intelligence. Therefore your first task is to begin with prayer. You must ask that the Lord in his great mercy grant you a true understanding of his words, should it please him to accomplish anything through you for his glory and not for your glory or that of any other man. For there is no one who can teach the divine words except he who is their author, as he says, “They shall all be taught by God.” You must

therefore completely despair of your own diligence and intelligence and rely solely on the infusion of the Spirit. Believe me, for I have had experience in this matter.

Then having achieved this despairing humility, read (the books of) the Bible in order from beginning to end, so that you first get the simple story in your mind (as I believe you have already done long since).

If you like my course of study, begin by reading Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*, which our Karlstadt, a man of incomparable zeal, has now edited and explained with remarkable annotations. Then take the book *Against Julian* and likewise the book *Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians*. Add blessed Ambrose's work on the calling of all heathen, although this book appears from its style, character, and chronology to have been written by someone other than Ambrose; it is nevertheless, a very learned book. If these suggestions appeal to you, I shall send you more later on. (Luther's letter to George Spalatin, Wittenberg, January 18, 1518, *Luther's Works*, 48)

3. Have a specific study Bible.

"When I went into the monastery," he himself relates, "I asked for a Bible and the brethren gave me one. It was bound in red leather. I made myself so thoroughly familiar with it, that I knew on which page and at what place upon the page each passage stood. Had I kept it, I should have become a splendid *localis biblicus*." (Nebe, p. 17-18)

4. Read steadily.

For a number of years I have now annually read through the Bible twice. If the Bible were a large, mighty tree and all its words were little branches, I have tapped at all the branches, eager to know what was there and what it had to offer. (Plass, p. 83)

5. Have a reading ritual:

a. Luther's morning ritual.

You should diligently learn the Word of God and by no means imagine that you know it. Let him who is able to read take a psalm in the morning, or some other chapter of Scripture, and study it for a while. This is what I do. When I get up in the morning, I pray and recite the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer with the children, adding one of the psalms. I do this only in order to keep myself well acquainted with these matters, and I do not want to let the mildew of the notion grow that I know them well enough. The devil is a greater rascal than you think he is. You do as yet not know what sort of fellow he is and what a desperate rogue you are. His definite design is to get you tired of the Word and in this way to draw you away from it. (Plass, p. 79)

b. Luther's evening ritual.

In the evening bear something of sacred words with thee in thy heart to bed, chewing the cud of which, like a clean ruminant animal, thou mayst sweetly fall asleep. But let it not be much in quantity; rather, little, well pondered and understood; so that, rising in the morning, thou mayst find ready for thee the relics of last night's feast. (*Watchwords for the Warfare of Life*, p. 156)

6. Realize that you will never understand the Bible completely.

I, although I am an old doctor of the Holy Scripture, have not yet come out of the children's lessons, and do not yet rightly understand the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. I cannot study or learn them through and through, but I am learning daily therein, and I pray the Catechism with my sons Hans, and with my little daughter Magdalene.

When, indeed, do we understand, in its breadth and depth, the first words of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven"? For if I understood and believed these few words, that God, who has created heaven and earth, and all creatures, and has them in his hand and power, is my Father, then would follow this sure conclusion, that I should also be a lord of heaven and earth; that Christ should be my brother, and all things be mine. Gabriel must be my servant and Raphael my guide, and all angels will minister to me in my needs.

But now, that my faith may be exercised and preserved, my Father in heaven lets me be thrown into a dungeon, or fall into the water. In such trial we see and experience how far we understand these words, how our faith totters, and how great our weakness is.

Therefore, the one little word "Thine," or "Our," is the hardest word in the Holy Scripture, as is to be seen in the First Commandment, "I am the Lord Thy God."
(*Watchwords for the Warfare of Life*, p. 158)

C. A conclusion in Luther's own words.

The Bible is no mere talisman which can lie closed on a shelf and radiate its magic power, transforming a home. Its message must be heard or read. (Preus, p. 142)

Oh, my Lord God, the Holy Scripture are not so easily understood, even when one reads them diligently. Let us learn well these three words, and ever remain learners before them—to love, fear, and trust God.

Under the Papacy they were constantly making pilgrimages to the shrines of the saints—to Rome, Jerusalem, St. Iago de Compostella—in order to make satisfaction for sins. But now we may make true Christian pilgrimages, in faith, which will please God; that is, if we diligently read the Prophets, Psalms, and Evangelists. Thus should we make journeys, not through the cities of the saints, but, through our thoughts and hearts, to God Himself: thus we make pilgrimages to the Promised Land and Paradise of Eternal Life. (*Watchwords for the Warfare of Life*, p. 160)

God be praise, the Bible itself is now in the hands of the people, together with plenty and useful books of many learned writers. In these a Christian can nourish himself well as the saying goes: The cow walks in grass up to the belly. Just so we, too, are truly well supplied in our time with the rich, full pasture of the divine Word. God grant that we gratefully use it and become fat and strong from it before the drought and the punishment for our unthankfulness come. Let us use the Word so that we shall not be obliged to devour stones and thistles again, as we had to theretofore under the papacy, but that we bring forth much fruit and become the Lord's disciples. To Him be praise and honor forever! Amen. (Plass, p. 83)

Part Three: Where the Rubber Hits the Road

I. General Suggestions

- A. Begin
- B. Begin with prayer
- C. Begin with a purpose: Philippians 3:8
- D. Have a set time for your personal reading as well as for your family devotions. This means setting some goals about what you want to read, how long you want to read each day and/or how much you want to read each day.
- E. Use a system for studying the Bible
 1. Ask as you study:
 - a. What does it say?
 - b. What does it tell me about myself?
 - c. What does it tell me about my Lord?
 - d. What does it lead me to do?
 2. The “Four R’s” System
 - a. **Read** a portion of Scripture.
 - b. **Research** who the main characters are, what is being described and why it is recorded.
 - c. **Relate** what you read to yourself. What is God teaching me here about Himself or about me, about what He wants me to do or what He has done or will do for me.
 - d. **Respond** to what you read. Think of how you will put the message you read into practice. Luke 11:28; James 1:22.
- F. Don’t be afraid to mark up your Bible! Use a highlighter, jot down notes, mark cross-references.
- G. Discuss what you have read with others.
- H. Close with prayer.

II. Practical Helps

- A. Reading schedules
 1. My personal devotional schedule
 2. The Bible in 365 Readings
 3. Through my Bible in 3 Years (NWL)
 4. Suggestions for a Daily Study of Luther’s Small Catechism
- B. Study Bibles
 1. *Concordia Self-Study Bible* (CPH)
 2. *Thompson’s Bible Chain Reference*
- C. Devotional Material
 1. *Lutheran Parent/Wellspring* (NPH)
 2. *Come, Take a Seat* (NPH)
 3. *Northwestern Lutheran*
 4. *Meditations*
 5. Northwestern Publishing House Catalogue
- D. Study Helps
 1. People’s Bible series
 2. Franzmann’s *Bible History Commentary* (three volumes)
 3. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Edersheim
 4. Topical Bibles
 5. Bible dictionary
 6. Bible encyclopedia
 7. Bible atlas
 8. Northwestern Publishing House
 9. Pastor’s study
- E. Appendix (material from Ken Kramer)

1. When You Read the Bible...
 - a. Remember, it has one point of focus: JESUS.
 - b. Accept what it says with child-like faith.
 - c. View it as an extraordinary gift; appreciate it.
 - d. Don't be selective about the things you study. Become familiar with all of God's Word.
 - e. If you don't understand, get help from someone you trust.
 - f. Don't look for hidden messages or secret codes. The Bible is for everyone. It speaks to you at your level of understanding.
 - g. Note key Bible texts. Write down locations. Memorize short portions of meaningful Bible texts. Quote them.
 - h. Talk about the things you read about in Scripture with other people.
2. Choosing Devotional Material
 - a. Is it Christ-centered?: *Does this material speak about Jesus as your personal Savior?*
 - b. Is it gospel-centered?: *Does this material lead you to be grateful for God's gift of salvation?*
 - c. Is it honest about sin and grace?: *Does this material emphasize your hopeless sinful condition? And does it emphasize that God's love is completely undeserved?*
 - d. Is it balanced?: *Does this material contain a good mix of hearing God's Word (sacramental) and expressions of appreciation to God (sacrificial)?*
 - e. Is it interactive, and can it be understood by children?: *Does this material provide you with opportunities to share the truth of God's Word with one another at a good range of understandings?*
 - f. Is it relevant?: *Does this material have meaning for your real-life encounters?*
 - g. Does it have impact?: *Is it immediate, forcefully presented and applicable?*
3. Practical Tips for the Devotional Home
 - a. Vary the length of devotions according to your family's schedule.
 - b. Establish a routine. Meet at the same time and place daily.
 - c. On special occasions do something special to celebrate God's love.
 - d. Get everyone involved.
 - e. Balance nurture in God's Word with expressions of thanks and praise.
 - f. If you miss several days at a time, start right up again.
 - g. Use written devotions if you can't prepare your own. If you don't like the ones you are using, look for others. (see "Choosing Devotional Material")
 - h. Use the Psalms.
 - i. Don't insist on having every family member present.
 - j. Parents: don't dominate spiritual discussions.
 - k. Utilize routine, repetition, and cycles in the church year.
 - l. Know the difference between law and gospel. Emphasize the gospel.
 - m. Become a student of God's Word.
 - n. Use visuals to focus: a candle, a wreath, a birthday cake, the newspaper, etc.
 - o. Use prayer circles or prayer lists to involve everyone in family prayer life.
 - p. Make family prayers as personal as possible.
 - q. Teach Bible stories and Bible characters to young children. Use visual language and pictures to stimulate their imagination.
 - r. With grade-school kids define terms and work on the facts.
 - s. Answer "Why" questions simply and honestly. If you don't know, say so. If it involves an article of faith, say so. Clarify incorrect impressions.
 - t. Use the metaphors of Scripture.
 - u. Adolescents deal with the realities of life. Use problem-solving techniques with teens. Address issues in an honest, forthright way.

- v. Invite visitors to join you for family devotions. Give them the option to participate.
- w. Don't permit an unspiritual family member to sabotage your devotional life. Worship God in your own home.
- x. Make a distinction between personal meditations and family devotions. A family needs to have opportunities to share faith with one another.
- y. Don't let your devotional life substitute for attending church.
- z. Include senior parents living with you in your devotional life.
- aa. Use devotions to discuss family tensions in the light of God's Word.
- bb. Know who the spiritual leader is in your household.
- cc. If your family doesn't have a devotional habit, start one. Make it a priority.
- dd. Approach devotional life as an opportunity for receiving many spiritual blessings.

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