

Dry or Drowning?

Leon Zimmerman has written a short, simple article about the importance of reading the Bible aloud. His advice can be applied specifically to two groups of people—those who cannot read for themselves, and those who can. (Clever readers will notice that every human being falls into one or the other of those categories.)

The Devil has two methods for keeping people from God’s Word. One method is suppressing all knowledge; the other is releasing all knowledge. He wants us to read either nothing, or *everything*. If he cannot keep the Bible from us entirely, he will try to drown out its voice. Mr. Zimmerman’s antidote can help solve both problems.

This is the information age. Words and images crash against our eyes and ears in a gushing torrent. Books, magazines, newspapers, speeches, sermons, debates, television, the internet, radio, advertisements, mass mailings—the wild storm of knowledge rains on both the interested and the uninterested, telling us everything, whether we want to know or not.

Our ancestors would be jealous. In the Middle Ages, literacy was rare and books were precious. If our age is a jungle, theirs was a desert. They didn’t read God’s Word because they couldn’t read anything at all. We don’t hear God’s Word because we *can* and *do* read anything at all.

Reading the Bible aloud helps us to navigate both the problem of too much information and the problem of not enough information. When young children hear the Bible read aloud, it helps them understand what they cannot read for themselves. When adults hear the Bible read aloud, it helps us to comprehend and process words and thoughts we might otherwise gloss over. In both circumstances, God has promised that His word will not return void, but will accomplish the goal for which He sent it.

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Reading

This article is reprinted from the fall 2004 edition of the Rosedale Bible College alumni magazine, the MIRROR.

Recently I stumbled across a small but significant principle that has impacted me deeply. I attended a meeting for fathers in which the speaker freely handed out a number of challenges. Among them was the encouragement to read the Bible aloud to our children. At that point Naomi and I were finishing a children’s Bible story book and were looking for another to use in our family devotions. I decided to take the speaker’s challenge.

I began reading, as the speaker suggested, in Genesis, Psalms and Matthew but soon dropped to only Genesis. Time and time again I was startled as I read. A few of my mental ponderings were, “It actually says this! Wow, this is blunt! I don’t recall this much repetition. This is powerful! Should I be reading this to an eight year old? I hope the children don’t ask a question about this detail.”

Something was happening that does not happen when I read silently. I was thinking through the details more deeply, visualizing the accounts more clearly and I was impacted by the message in deeper ways. And, as far as I could determine, all because I was reading aloud!

During the past decade students on numerous Christian college campuses have revived the practice of reading the Bible aloud. In Bible reading marathons they have read without interruption, reading the New Testament in about 22 hours and the whole Bible in 72. Many testify that the exercise has been revolutionary.

Paul encouraged the young minister Timothy to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture.

Cicero, a first century BC orator and philosopher, apologized to a friend because he was not able to read a

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by Leon Zimmerman

letter that he had recently received from him because he had a sore throat! He would not read his friend's letter silently. That would have been disrespectful toward his friend. He would wait till the sore throat was gone and then read it, aloud.

What would happen were we to revive the practice of reading the Bible aloud in our personal, family and worship settings? It

would take longer and we would need to concentrate more but it would impact us more deeply. I encourage you to take up the challenge. **BB**

Leon Zimmerman is president of Rosedale Bible College.

