

A walk with Mr O (2)

How important is daily Bible reading?

Mr. O, last time we went for a walk together, you took me a bit by surprise.

Oh, yes? Why was that?

Well, I asked you what has helped you most in your Christian life, and you said it was being an active member of a biblical church. But I've asked the same question to other people, and all of them have said it was having a time of Bible reading and prayer every day.

Okay. So today let's talk about daily Bible reading, and then discuss prayer another time. Would you agree to that?

That sounds reasonable.

I wouldn't want to discourage you from reading God's Word every day, but did you know that most Christians in history, even the keenest of them, haven't done that?

Now you're surprising me again! But how can you be a keen Christian and not be an avid Bible reader? Surely that's not possible.

Let's think about it for a moment. How well do you remember your history lessons at school? When was the printing press invented?

I think it was the Chinese who invented printing, long ago. But the modern printing press, as we know it, was invented by Johannes Gutenberg in the fifteenth century.

Yes! Up until then all Bibles were hand copied. Because of the lengthy labour involved, it cost a fortune to buy one. Sometimes a church might own one, but having your own personal Bible was something that individual believers could only dream of. Daily Bible reading was therefore out of the question.

Do you know, I've never thought about that?

Not only so, but after the invention of printing, even though a church or a family might own a Bible, it was several centuries before the average Christian could possess a copy of their own. Even then many of them were not sufficiently literate to read it. And yet during those long centuries without personal daily Bible reading millions of people were converted, grew in grace, witnessed to those around them, resisted heresies, stood firm in persecution, embraced the Reformation and experienced times of revival.

However, did they manage?

They didn't 'manage' – they flourished! Countless numbers of those believers actually knew their Bibles far better than most of today's Christians. The fact of the matter is that the risen and ascended Head of the Church has, through the centuries, sent a stream of men to faithfully teach the Scriptures to His flock. By preaching with authority, leading other meetings for study and discussion, having close pastoral dealings with individual and families, and encouraging personal meditation, these church-serving men were the means by which the Saviour tended and fed His lambs and sheep.

I see now why you stress the importance of being an active member of what I think you called 'a Bible-believing, Christ-loving, cross-proclaiming church.'

Yes, if you have a healthy church life you can flourish as a Christian, even if you are not able to read the Bible every day. But if you read the Bible every day, but are not committed to such a church, you are likely to end up as a spiritual cripple.

But you're not against daily Bible reading, are you?

Not at all. I encourage it. There are people in history who shed their blood so that we could enjoy this wonderful privilege. But Bible reading is no substitute for church. It can, however, be an extraordinary blessing. So, before we move on to discuss prayer, let's talk next time about how our personal reading of God's Word can be more fruitful.

I shall look forward to it!