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How Can We Become Biblically Literate?

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How Can We Become Biblically Literate?

Abstract

"The Bible is to be read as a single book of progressive revelation moving from the Old to the New Testament."

Posting about acquiring Biblical knowledge from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/how-can-we-become-biblically-literate/>

Keywords

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

How Can We Become Biblically Literate?

 allinallthings.org/how-can-we-become-biblically-literate/

Jay Shim

We are living in an age of material and technological abundance. Access to and use of the Bible has become ever more convenient and easy. The Bible is now practically everywhere, thanks especially to the smartphone app. However, ironically enough, biblical understanding and its use has become shallower and less serious as biblical access has become more convenient and easy. We are definitely living in a culture that needs to hear God's warning: "*famine of hearing the words of the Lord*" is a form of divine judgment (Amos 8:11–12).

Biblical literacy – knowing the basics of the Bible – can either be an issue of how much one knows about the Bible or how well and properly one knows the Bible. The former relates to the quantity and the latter to the quality of Bible knowledge. The latter relates to the proper way of understanding the message of the Bible. The quantity of biblical literacy is not as impactful or valuable without proper quality of its knowledge. Biblical literacy in its full sense is not just acquiring knowledge about the Bible, but should mean a deepening of Christ-likeness in the way that we live with the Bible, applying it for "*teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thus, I suggest a way of achieving biblical literacy beginning with remarks on the nature and big picture of the Bible, including meditating and living with it.

Simply put, the Bible is the record of the sovereign God's proclamation of salvation over all creation. The Bible reflects the King's language. It begins with the sovereign Lord's voice, "*let there be light*" (Genesis 1:3) in the creation account, moving to claim and establish his lordship over Israel and sending Jesus as the Cosmic Christ to redeem the entire world, and ends with gathering his people from all nations at the end to create the new heaven and new earth. The overarching structure of the Bible as creation-fall-redemption-consummation in a grand cosmic view determines what to find in it, the purpose of reading it, the scope of Christian religion, and the nature of redeemed life. The Bible is to be read as a single book of progressive revelation moving from the Old to the New Testament, as it sets the foundation of the future salvation in the early part of Genesis, moving through giving the covenant and law to Israel toward the fulfillment of the means of salvation through Christ. Thus, the Old and New Testament are not two stories, but a unified story of salvation in two parts.

In the progressive unfolding of God's plan of salvation from the Old Testament, we find who Christ is and what He has done — the main feature of the gospel. He did not just come from heaven, but came as the new Priest, Prophet, and King, and – more than any office – as the Messiah, to fulfill the promises of salvation of the Old Testament. In that grand narrative, Christ is not just the Mediator for humans who saves their souls by forgiving them. Salvation in Christ would not be limited to going to heaven. Rather, Christ is described in the Bible as the Reconciler and fulfillment of all things (Colossians 1:15-20). Within this grand scope of God's salvation we find the place and meaning of human salvation. Paul explains that as sin came into the world through one man, so salvation and life came to the world through one perfect man, Christ. Through Christ's salvation God recreates the believing person, giving them eternal life, and through their services reclaims his sovereignty over his entire kingdom, the whole creation.

In this overarching structure of God's salvation we find a proper Christian balance of personal piety and duty in public life. Salvation is given as the gift of God's grace through faith. It is done by the work of the Holy Spirit who rests upon and works in each believer of Christ. It is done by the spiritual principle that

restores and reconciles a right relationship with God. The Christian life does not end with spiritual renewal, but only begins with it and extends to a fully mature and sanctified life in the unfolding of the Kingdom of God. God makes believers, individually and communally, models for proper human life (Matthew 5). Christians are not hidden in the world, but sent into the world to reclaim every part of it back to God's glory and righteousness. They are sent as public figures to the world with a mission. The mission is their life itself; they are the ambassadors and their lives represent the One who sent them into the world. Indeed, the mission includes evangelism but is not limited by it.

Biblical literacy begins with acquiring knowledge of the Bible and matures to living with it. Thus, knowledge of the Bible is to be reflected in a believer's own life situation to the point of seasoning it to working wisdom and discernment. Faith for Abraham did not mean an acquired religious concept or knowledge about God, but trusting God even in unfavorable life situations (Genesis 12-22). "*The Lord's love is with those who fear him... with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts*" (Ps 103:17-18).

Lastly, I want to add the benefit of Bible memorization for mature biblical literacy. Putting the Bible to memory has been the most traditional way of knowing, reflecting, and living with biblical knowledge, and still is a very practical and useful task for Christian life. Many sincere Christians have experiences of how they praised God with memorized Bible verses in moments of joy and also how they became encouraged and revitalized by it in moments of trouble. Memorized Bible verses are neither the Word written in stone nor in a smartphone app, but God's Word written in our own hearts in a manner that not only reminds, but also shapes and forms our lives back to God in His image for His joy and glory to be deepened in who we are as His children.