

Old Tricks for the Best Good Book

Recently, we have been given time to do things that we often neglect when we are busy. Cooking is one of those things. I read an article that reminded me of home – where I observed some unique tools in operation. Bacon was fired in a cast iron skillet and turned with a fork. (I still turn it with a fork) A wire pastry cutter in a mixing bowl made pie crust. A glass was used to cut biscuits (does anyone still make biscuits?).

Now there are more complicated tools for specific uses that were to make the task simpler and less messy. That is not always the case.

It is possible to overcomplicate things that can be simple and result in good. The article set me to thinking about Bible reading. I got the computer, I can hear someone saying. Have you discovered yet that all that is available online is not reliable? In light of that reality – here are some simple and reliable ways to enhance your reading and understanding of Scripture.

Read often and read again

Sometimes we forget the value of repetitive reading which trains us to follow the meaning of the text. When we do that we discover that we begin to notice ideas, names and phrases. This process will help us to focus on new things with each reading. I have found that reading an entire book of the Bible from start to finish and then reading it again and again will likely bring new insights with each reading.

Have a map available

When the book Lord of the Rings was published, a very helpful component to understand the book and story was the map provided at the beginning. This is helpful in reading the Bible. Many of us need help to understand the geography of the Bible – so use the maps to guide us to deeper and better understanding. Acts 8 is an example as the Ethiopian traveled 1500 miles to find the answer to the desire of his heart. Paul's missionary journey maps help us understand and reinforces our retention of the story.

Seek out or develop a Bible timeline

Ask questions when you read. Who lived at this time? What else was happening in the world? Keep a Bible timeline available to better put each event in historical perspective. Perhaps it will help uncover the themes that God is addressing in each age. A book mark in the timeline in the Bible will give insight into your understanding.

Compare various translations

Today we have available many and diverse translations. Make use of them to compare. Sometime use a different translation in your repetitive reading.

Dictionary – Have it available

Whether it is a book you open or a search you make – look up words about which you are uncertain. Sometimes it will use a word like propitiation. Even looking up common words like steadfast or righteousness will expand our understanding.

Get started reading. It does not have to be complicated. Great if you know Hebrew or Greek. Most of us are not proficient in the original language. So read with renewed attention. I pray that these simple tools will be used repeatedly and yield spiritual growth and hunger.