

# The Cumming Exhorter

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2055 Pilgrim Road  
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770-887-7353

## Blessed Is He Who Reads

Reading is a lost art, I fear. It's a very ancient art, of course, but in our multimedia age, many have forgotten the importance of it. The skill of reading, the value of reading, and even the enjoyment of reading is lost on most of us nowadays.

But developing a deeper devotion to God is impossible without a good bit of reading: *we must either read the Scriptures for ourselves or have them read to us*. As John began the great prophecy of Revelation, he wrote, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy" (1:3). There is a blessing that comes from the reading and hearing of God's word that can't be gained by any other means.

### **Private reading.**

There are very few of us who are reading the Scriptures privately as often as we need to. We may study a Bible lesson or two for attendance at the local congregation, and we may follow along as the preacher reads a passage from the Bible now and then, but not many of us make the reading of God's word a regular part of our daily routine.

If you're serious about spiritual growth, you need to read the Bible *every day*. You need to read through *the entire Bible* on a regular basis, at least once a year. You need to read *longer sections* of the text, taking in whole books of the Bible at one or two sittings whenever possible. And while a detailed "study" of the Bible is also important, you need to simply *read* the Bible as often as you can, so that the sense of the text *as a whole* can make its proper impression on you.

In addition to your reading, you will also profit from listening to recordings of the Bible being read by readers who really know how to read. Audio recordings of the entire Bible are readily available, and if you'll learn to use these regularly, you may find that you enjoy hearing God's word read while you're driving, doing chores around the house, and so forth.

### **Public reading.**

When John said, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy," he probably had in mind the public reading of inspired writings in the Christian assembly. And when Paul directed Timothy to "give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13), he may also have had in mind the reading of the Scriptures when the saints assembled.

Today, many congregations include a "Scripture reading" as a part of their assembly, but unfortunately, the reading rarely includes more than a few verses. Wouldn't it be profitable to have longer readings, even if it meant the preacher had to abbreviate his lesson to make room for the reading? And wouldn't it also be profitable if those who accepted the responsibility to read took that duty more seriously, carefully preparing and practicing the reading so that the real meaning of the text was made evident to the hearers by the manner in which it was read?

As a preacher, I've decided to slow down and actually turn to more of the passages that I cite. I urge my listeners to turn to the passages in their own Bibles, and I read not only the verse that pertains to my point but also the surrounding context, with as little comment from me as possible. I believe that I've been depriving my hearers of hearing the text *read*, and I've decided to rectify that. I've actually come around to this radical position: neither quoting the passage from memory nor projecting it on a PowerPoint slide is a good substitute for the preacher and the audience *both turning to the text and reading it together in their own Bibles*.

"Blessed is he who reads and he who hears," said John. Personally, I'm going to do more reading from God's word, both privately and publicly, and I'm going to seek out more opportunities to hear God's word read by others. How about you?

# Announcements

*Those in need of prayer*

*Members:*

*Amanda Robinson - pregnancy*

*Ron Mayhew - Knee surgery*

*Gary Headrick - Broken right wrist*

*Lorene Yellott - on going health problems*

*Sara Lowe - Migraine s*

*Family and Friends*

*Helen Eubanks - Jeff's mother, diagnosed with colon cancer*

*Sara Hoey - is deployed this month.*

*News*

*Remember our coin jug in the foyer; Rain Tree Village Children's Home will be back in the fall. Put you loose change in and help these children.*

*Signup sheets in foyer. One for the Fifth Sunday Meals Host and for the lawn care and cleaning of the baptistery.*

*We have a new church calendar in the foyer; it has everyone's birthday and/or anniversary listed for the month of Feb. If you find you have not been put on the calendar or there is a mistake, please let Dianne know so she can correct any errors.*

*If you have some news let us know and we will put it in the bulletin. Let Gary know and we will see that it is included with our news.*