

Preface

When I first became a Christian at the age of eleven I knew I had to read the Bible. I bought myself a big black leather King James Version and every night I read a chapter at a time, hoping against all hope that it would be one of those shortish ones. Reading Psalms with its small chapters was fine, but I still remember the shock of seeing Psalm 119 for the first time!

It did me good, but often I couldn't remember what I'd read the night before. In fact often I couldn't remember what I'd read five minutes before. I was very grateful for the string that marked my place.

Wading through the Old Testament I would think, 'If I'd been to Israel, I might understand, or at least know how to pronounce, "Pi-hahiroth" or "Baal-zephon" or 'Migdol'. 'If I was good at maths I might be able to understand what the ark or the temple looked like. After all, what on earth is a cubit?! If only I could speak Hebrew or Greek like the preachers I heard. But they seemed to complicate matters in my mind and anyway I couldn't even cope with French in school. What hope could there be for me?

All this made me despair of understanding all of the Bible, so I started to have favourite bits, and distinctly un-favourite bits – most of it.

I persevered without grasping much at all because I knew from my parents that all of the Bible was God's Word but it was

not until years later, listening to the preaching of Paul Tucker, that I discovered the key to understanding it all.

Once I saw this, and the light was switched on, I saw the whole Bible could be understood and enjoyed.

By the way, when I say 'all', I don't mean when my father made me eat 'all' of a slightly off-looking cheese sandwich at an old lady's house – not wanting to cause offence but struggling to force down each mouthful. The Bible is not like that. I mean the 'all' of a huge chocolate sundae at Joe's ice-cream parlour, where only a fool would leave even a melted drop left – hardly a duty!

If you don't believe me, read what the Bible says about itself, 'How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!' (Ps. 119:103).

The Bible promises to give great experiences.

It makes me understand myself.

It makes me understand the world.

It is my light, my life, my hope, my guide, my joy.

It shows me how to clean up the mess I make of my life at times.

It gives advice in all circumstances.

It gives me strength when I feel weak.

It gives comfort.

It makes sense of my suffering.

It gives purpose to my existence.

It saves my life.

It makes me wise.

It saves from my enemies.

It makes me cry, and it is my delight.

It makes me solid as a Christian.

And it teaches me to praise.

The purpose of this book is not to kick-start daily Bible reading, or to get you to read commentaries or other Christian books, as useful as they might be. I want to be far more daring than that.



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I want you to delight in the Bible, so that when someone asks you how your daily reading is going, you'll answer, 'I wouldn't miss it for the world, it's delicious.' I want you to hunger to devour it, not in bite-size chapters, but setting time aside to read each book of the Bible through from beginning to end, as in fact they were originally meant to be read.

My hope is that whatever your upbringing, intelligence or church background, you will thirst after reading God's Word, all of it, and delight in every single bit.

