

Spiritual reading in spiritual formation Instructions
From *The Multi-Church Pastor* by Philip E. Morrison, p. 32-33.

Spiritual reading is a discipline that is important in spiritual formation. Elders and other church leaders in a multi-church situation may be left on their own for long periods of time while the MCP is not present. It is my observation that many Christians are unsure of how to read and study the Bible for their own spiritual nurture. Spiritual reading will help them to be nourished and fed when the MCP is away.

Spiritual reading is a simple, yet meaningful, method to help elders grow in their faith and knowledge of the Word of God. Only the Bible is needed for spiritual reading. One does not need other books or manuals or to be at a certain venue. There is no need for expert guidance and it can be done according to one's own schedule. R. Stewart writes:

Each participant must have a special copy of the Bible, which he will only use for this purpose. It can be a cheap edition, and it can be the New Testament only. Let us not start the training before this pre-condition is fulfilled and each one has his special copy of the Bible. The reason is that each one must feel very free to mark his Bible in a very personal way, and must not feel shy to mark things in a Bible which will then be used for other purposes. If some cannot yet have a special copy of the Bible, then let us postpone the training until they have it.ⁱ

Spiritual reading can be done following these steps:ⁱⁱ

1. Preliminary Steps

- Decide at what quiet place you will do your spiritual reading.
- Decide at what fixed period of time you will do your spiritual reading. This can be done daily or once or twice a week.
- Decide what texts you will use for your spiritual reading. Don't jump from place to place. Determine to read through one book at a time.

2. Practical Steps for each spiritual reading

- Take time to be still and be aware of the presence of the Lord.
- Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help and guide you in your reading. Tell the Lord that you are willing to submit to the authority of the Word of God in your life and that you will obey the commands that you learn from your reading.
- Read the text aloud slowly.
- Mark with a continuous line any text that moves you or pleases you. Mark with a broken line any passage that you are not comfortable with or that challenges you.
- Read the text again silently and slowly, watching your reactions to the text, especially to the portions already marked.
- Quietly think about the marked passages or words. Why are you comfortable with some texts and uncomfortable about others? Think about how the marked texts relate to your life.
- Pray about the message that God's Word has brought to your life and how you should respond to it.
- Share with someone what you have learned from God's Word that is helping you or challenging you in your spiritual life.

ⁱ R. Stewart, R. Broderick, and F. Lobinger, *Spiritual Growth of Community Leaders, No. 16M*, (Lumko Institute, 1984), p. 7.

ⁱⁱ Adapted from R. Stewart, R. Broderick, and F. Lobinger, *Spiritual Growth of Community Leaders, No. 16P* of the Training for Community Ministries, (Lumko Institute, 1997), p. 6.