



WEEK EIGHT

SPF: Say Prayers Frequently

Becoming Familiar with the Lectionary

The Church's lectionary designates Scripture readings for every day of the year. The readings correspond to the particular ecclesiastical season in which the Church finds itself. The daily lectionary often consists of two readings from the New Testament—one from the epistles and another from one of the four gospels. The frequent reading of Holy Scripture is a hallmark of Orthodox Christian spirituality. With faithful reading, the Bible brings us into meaningful relationship with God.

Begin to incorporate the lectionary readings into the regular prayer life of your family. Links to the daily readings are easily found on the homepage of www.goarch.org as well as a daily readings app offered by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Of course, the prescribed chapters and verses of the readings can be viewed from electronic devices; however, when possible, try to read aloud from a hard copy of the Bible. There is no comparable substitute! By holding the Bible in our hands, we familiarize ourselves more intimately with its holy precepts. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and light to my paths" (Psalm 118:105/119:105, Septuagint).

Master who loves us, shine Your eternal light in our hearts that we may better know you. Help us to fully understand Your Gospel message. Instill in us respect for Your holy commandments, that by overcoming our worldly desires we might live a spiritual life of thoughts and deeds that pleases You. We ask this of You, O Christ our God, for You are the light of our souls and bodies and You we glorify with Your eternal Father and Your all-holy good and life-giving Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

—Prayer Before Studying the Bible

Dive In: What's the Word

The Bible has something to say about every aspect of the human experience. As a family brainstorm a bunch of words you want to look up (such as truth, love, resurrection, death, etc.). Put each word on a slip of paper, fold them up, and put them in a container. This week when your family is together—perhaps during mealtime—pick a word and look it up in the Bible.

This is done easily if you have a Bible with a concordance in the back. If you do not, you can use www.biblegateway.com. Try to find a few passages for each word to share (when possible try to include both the old and new testaments). Even if you need to look up the passages on the computer, try to physically look them up in your home Bible and read them from there.

Have a notebook that you designate for Bible questions. As questions arise, put them in the notebook so you can discuss at some point with your parish priest. Remember, reading the Bible isn't like other books—the more you read, the more that is revealed, and yet you will never fully understand it. By engaging with it regularly with humility, you will grow closer to the Lord. As St. John of Damascus writes, "If we read once or twice and do not understand what we read, let us not grow weary, but let us persist, let us talk much, let us inquire ... for the Scriptures possess inexhaustible grace."

Take pictures, and don't forget to share with us!
#soakuptheSON

Vitamin D: The Necessity of Reading the Bible

I also always entreat you, and do not cease entreating you, not only to pay attention here to what I say, but also when you are at home, to persevere continually in reading the divine Scriptures.

When I have been with each of you in private, I have not stopped giving you the same advice. Do not let anyone say to me those vain words, worthy of heavy condemnation, "I cannot leave the courthouse, I administer the business of the city, I practice a craft, I have a wife, I am raising children, I am in charge of a household, I am a man of the world; reading the Scriptures is not for me, but for those who have been set apart, who have settled on the mountaintops, who keep this way of life continuously."

What are you saying, man? That attending to the Scriptures is not for you, since you are surrounded by a multitude of cares? Rather it is for you more than for them. They do not need the help of the divine Scriptures as much as those do who are involved in many occupations. The monks, who are released from the clamor of the marketplace and have fixed their huts in the wilderness, who own nothing in common with anyone, but practice wisdom without fear in the calm of the quiet life, as if resting in a harbor, enjoy great security; but we, as if tossing in the midst of the sea, driven by a multitude of sins, always need continuous and ceaseless aid of the Scriptures. They rest far from the battle, and so they do not receive many wounds; but you stand continuously in the front rank, and you receive continual blows. So you need more remedies.

—St. John Chrysostom

What role does reading the Bible have in your life?

How can you spend more time reading the Word of God?

