

Some Benefits to Having a Paper Bible on Your Lap

I have the mobile and electronic devices. I have a computer. I have an iPhone. And I use them daily. They benefit me tremendously in my work, in my writing, in my communication, and in my research. So I have no problem with the electronic devices and tablets and gadgets per se. But I'd like to share a few pastoral thoughts about why it may be beneficial and prudent to go to church with a paper bible in hand rather than a tablet, or an iPad, or an iPhone. In fact, I would suggest that it would be worth your serious consideration whether you should leave your cell phone (or tablet, etc) in the car while you're in church. I suggest that this is especially true for parents with young and teenage children.

In what follows, I'll provide what I believe to be some benefits of having a paper Bible with you and open before you when you gather with God's people to worship.

- 1. it aids you in focusing in Scripture alone rather than the temptations a device may bring.** This may seem overly obvious but the cell phone is like bringing truckload of temptations do your front porch. I'm not referring necessarily to *sinful* or immoral temptations. I'm just suggesting that we prioritize the Bible alone when we sit under the Word of God and there are far fewer temptations when you have your paper Bible open on your lap and a pen and paper to take notes than there are if you've got your iPhone open with apps, calendars, scores, programs, games, and even ringers!
- 2. it prevents the endless distractions that could come with an electronic device (text/popup/remindernet/internet).** Having your cell phone with your Bible on it may bring an unnecessary distraction or temptation to respond to *this* text or *that* alert or *this* email or *that* breaking news report, but why even put yourself in that situation to be distracted? True, someone may say that there are many other temptations (people sitting near you, the instruments, the preacher's attire, etc.). But we live in a digital, cell-phone worshipping age, and doesn't it seem prudent to do all that you can to intentionally focus on God's Word in God's House rather than bring a gadget that may distract you from hearing what God has for you through the Word of God?
- 3. it sets an example for the children/teens to have an open Bible.** This is the passion that gave rise to this article. Dear parents, how do you teach your children? Do you want to model for them to get a little Bible on their phone here or there? Do we really believe that when our children are on their phones that they're doing nothing but *studiously poring over the Scriptures*? Perhaps -- and we pray this would be the case. But oftentimes, it isn't. What if you have your children (children and teens and young adults) bring their paper bible with them to church *and leave their cell phone in the car*. And parents, you do the same! Set the example. Show them it's good and proper and beneficial to have a Bible and to use it well, know it well, love it, know it, memorize it, and walk with it.
- 4. it serves in cross-reference study to have fingers in 2 or more scriptures to compare.** It's far easier to track with the preaching of the Word if the preacher goes from Scripture to Scripture and text to text and Testament to Testament when you have a paper Bible. It can just be quicker and more profitable to have your paper Bible open and turning with the teacher to the texts that he's reading. You could even leave a pice of paper there in a text for further study at a later point.
- 5. it helps you learn the order of the books of the Bible better.** This is mentioned because of the overwhelming illiteracy of the Bible in our day. It is good to know the books of the Bible and the *order* of the books of the Bible! One knows the order of the books of the Bible better when he has a paper Bible and is flipping from book to book rather than just going to a Table of Content screen and tapping the Book. Take 25 seconds and see if you can turn to Malachi, then Matthew, then Ruth, then Romans, then I Chronicles, then I Corinthians, then Hosea, then Hebrews, then Song of Solomon, then Philemon. See if someone can do it quicker in a paper Bible or on a tablet. I suggest it would be the person with the paper Bible.
- 6. it familiarizes you with the text & with locating Scriptures for future reference.** As you track with the preacher by looking at the texts, words, phrases, paragraphs in your text you become familiar with texts themselves and *where* the texts are in your particular copy of God's Word so that in future times of need, you can

go back and reference a verse or section. Even though you may not remember the specific reference you may remember, for example, that it was on the top side of the left column on the left page of your Bible. This can only be done with a paper copy of God's Word.

7. **it may allow you to mark in your Bible a note or two or a cross reference.** I suppose there may be some apps or programs that allow you to take notes on the digital devices, but it's not the same as underlining a key word, or drawing a circle and connecting it to key word a few verses earlier, or jotting down an outline in a particular portion of Scripture. This is more readily available in having your paper Bible open and before you.
8. **it contributes to the benefit of reading books (chapters) and not just reading clips/quotes (from a device).** When we read on our phones or tablets we train ourselves to read little portions at a time (or, what can fit on a screen in front of us) and then as we keep scanning or flipping or scrolling to read more and more text, it can become burdensome and tedious. But having an open Bible on your lap more easily lends itself to lengthy Bible reading and focused times of saturating in Scripture.
9. **it presents a kind of priority & seriousness as you carry and open and study your Bible.** We don't parade ourselves around carrying Bibles *just to be seen* and *noticed* by others. That would be arrogant and prideful. Nevertheless, there is something important about walking to church *with a Bible in hand*. You have your Bible and you understand that you're in God's House to study God's Word with God's people. As you carry your Bible and study your Bible, there's a priority and a seriousness as you have it with you and set it before you and reference it with your eyes continually during the sermon.
10. **it will not die if you use it constantly for 10+ hours. there's no battery life to the written text of the Bible.** Quite simply, electronic devices have battery life that sometimes can fade out and die. But, of course, with your paper Bible, it never gets low in battery life!

SUMMARIZING & SIMPLIFYING the 9 benefits...

Quite simply, what are the benefits of having an open, paper Bible before you at church?

1. PROTECTION (from distractions as it protects you from unnecessary popups, texts, alerts, emails, scores, etc.)
2. FOCUS (helps you in focusing on Scripture alone as you zoom in on the book resting on your lap as the priority)
3. EXAMPLE (this especially is true for parents to model the setting aside of devices and guard from distractions)
4. STUDY (aids in cross-reference/turning to multiple scriptures as you flip from Scripture to Scripture in a sermon)
5. ORDER (with a paper Bible, you learn the order of books of the Bible far better than on a device)
6. FAMILIARIZATION (with texts/where they're located on the page for review at a later point)
7. NOTE-TAKING (jotting down notes in your paper Bible can be easier and more memorable than on a device)
8. SERIOUSNESS (take your bible to church to hear God talk; there's a reason God gave us a *book* & we use it)
9. SUSTAINABILITY (the bible just doesn't lose battery-life, doesn't die; it always has full charge!)