

# Public Reading of Scripture in Corporate Worship: Some Helpful Tips

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God speaks when the Bible speaks. As a man holds the Bible and reads it, the sovereign Master of all creation utters His voice. At Christ Fellowship Bible Church, one element of worship that we include in every corporate worship gathering is the public reading of Holy Scripture. We want to hear from God. We sit under the authority of His Word. And we model for the flock the importance of reading the Word, the reverence when hearing the Word, and the way to pray through the Word. Here are some helpful tips to bear in mind when engaging in the corporate reading of Scripture.

## **1. Read REVERENTLY.**

The Bible is God's Book and it is the very word of the Living God. The Bible should, then, be read differently than the morning newspaper. Men must read it with care, with honor, with reverence, and with awe as if we really had God's very spoken Words that He gave to us, for indeed, that's precisely what we have. The Bible should be opened before the people and they must all know that the man standing before them has God's book and that he will read from God's book and give God's truth to all God's people and as a result of this, all people must give full attention and listen well to God's voice. To also display reverence, one custom that many congregations may incorporate is having everyone stand in honor of the Word of God. This physically and visually reminds everyone that we stand in the presence of majesty. If anything deserves this, hearing the voice of God deserves unrivaled reverence.

## **2. Read CONFIDENTLY.**

When standing and reading the Word, it deserves to be read with confidence, with a loud voice as the reader knows that he is in fact reading God's truth. One should not read the Word timidly or shyly, or quietly or apologetically. He should read it with power and with confidence and with earnestness since he himself as the reader (the 'lector') knows he is imparting God's truth to God's people through God's unchanging Word. This deserves to be read, then, with triumphant confidence.

## **3. Read ARTICULATEDLY.**

Those who publicly read the Scripture in the corporate gathering should practice reading their portion of Scripture out loud prior to the corporate gathering. He should notice the punctuation marks (commas, periods, exclamation points, question marks) and he should take note of all city names and regions, proper names, etc. that may warrant his practice ahead of time. He does not want to stand before the congregation and fumble his way through place names, people's names, and regions. And certainly he never wants to make a facial gesture that appears to be joking or making fun of a particular name (whether it's hard to articulate, long, or just plain uncommon to us today). Practice it ahead of time, read it clearly and articulately. Indeed, the reader must read the text as if he himself is convinced that he's reading God's very words.

#### **4. Read ENGAGINGLY.**

This takes practice. Read the text to engage people in and through your reading. There are some people who cannot read publicly and engage people because they read monotone and with a lifeless passion. They have no regard for punctuation marks and people are noticeably unengaged. It must never be this way. The reader must hold the Word open for people to see the source from which he's reading and he should read to engage with the people. He should pause when needed. He should raise his voice when needed. He should ask questions with the tone that is appropriate. He must read and periodically look up to engage with his audience and make sure they are tracking with him in their Bibles or, at least, that their eyes are fixed upon him as he reads from the text of Scripture. Read to engage. Read God's truth to touch people's hearts.

#### **5. Read PASSIONATELY.**

No man should ever rise and read the Bible heartless and without passion. Never should he read the Bible as if he were reading a novel that he picked up at a local bookstore. He should read with care, precision, passion, love, excitement, and confidence. In his reading, all people present must perceive that he (the reader) believes what he reads because he reads with such passion. He must seek to put people back in time, in that text, to feel what they felt, to know God more.

#### **6. Read EXPECTANTLY.**

Reading the Word in corporate worship engages the hearts of God's people and it produces a powerful effect. Because Scripture is living and active, it always produces the ends for which God sends it forth. In the providence of God and in His gracious timing, he may have the corporate reading of the Bible be a text that a hurting saint needs to hear. It may be a passage that a wayward saint is convicted by. It may be a chapter that the lost are converted as the Spirit impresses upon their heart the holiness of God, the guilt of their sin, and the glorious work of Christ. Always read the Word expecting great things from God. Never is the Bible reading a filler time in the worship service. Never is it a time to tune out, disengage, and exit the sanctuary to use the restroom. It is God's voice being heard through God's Word as it is read publicly, expectantly, and anticipating great things from God as He feeds His people through His truth.