

SO1.1 – How To Read

Preliminary Thoughts

When the day of judgment comes, inquiry will not be made of us of what we have read, but what we have done, not how well we have spoken, but how piously we have lived (*Imitation of Christ* I.3.4; more at <http://www.davidpfield.com/other/imitation.doc>)

Introductory

Three presenting questions:

- how to “gut” a book
- reading faster
- maintaining reading habits after college

This is a spiritual issue

Idolatry – knowledge for power rather than obedience for dominion

which relates to selfishness

from which flows ...

- resentment
- envy
- pride
- laziness/irresponsibility

Instead, cheerfully acknowledging our finitude, we want

- humble, grateful obedience
- kingdom-orientation
- trust that *God* will do the work
- glad of the marginal gain
- happy about distribution of gifts

What did Jesus read?

What did Paul read?

Let's be clear about what we want

We can't read everything ... and, even if we could, it's not that that makes the difference we seek.

Effectiveness and efficiency for the sake of the kingdom

We are striving after useful reading not speed reading. Measure your reading by “ability to serve” units and it's obvious that words-per-minute is a very small factor compared with

- choosing the right books (A reads slowly - one worthwhile book takes 3 hours. B reads quickly - one worthwhile and one worthless book take him 4 hours. It's like buying something you don't need at a bargain price)
- increasing the usability of what you do read.

Reading well *does* matter:

- books change the world
- efficiency is part of being a good servant
- we cannot escape the demand to be acquainted with x, y, z
- we cannot escape the duty of knowing a, b, c
- the better we read (what we are right to read), the better we serve

Five key facts about books

1. A book is a person saying something

- worth listening to? why saying it? something important/relevant?
- friends; acquaintances; toothbrush makers; important people; character (proud, rude, verbose etc)
- you are not obliged to agree with something in print
- you may like or be interested in some sections but not in others
- you can leave their company (without being rude!)
- many will do you *no* good whatsoever

2. Books are not all the same

- different purpose, potential. Some change your life and your way of thinking; others give light relief and temporary interest; others provide necessary info for the short term

3. A book is an object

- book intimidation - submodalities of the servant not the master, the tool not the tyrant; on floor - you are my servant ... Joy, confidence, mastery, and acquisitiveness
- flexibility of approach (see above) **you don't read whole newspaper**, pick and choose different styles of reading (not one thing). Like listening: half an ear to radio in background, critically to salesman, concentration for info, with focus of spirit to prayer

4. A book is an investment

- £15,000 p.a. @ 50 hrs p.w. = £6 per hour. (£50k = £20 per hour; £100k = £40 per hour)
- If 300 pp book takes 10 hours then £60/400 is cost, not the £8 you paid for it.

Some books are worth that, many are not.

5. The 80/20 rule and the law of diminishing returns apply to reading no less than to lots of other activities

- 80% of the value from 20% of the book (e.g. summaries, conclusions, blurb, preface, and index)
- 80% of all get from it in 20% of time to read it all through.
- 1st hour with a book - 50%, 2nd hour - 30%, 3rd and succeeding hours - 5%
- this means, comfortingly, that
 - it's good to *buy* books because you get much of the benefit from them in your 10 mins drool
 - it's fine to have books with just the first and last chapters marked

It is very, very important to know *why* we are reading

Generally – relate to our identity / mission

Specifically – what is the particular gain to be had from spending time with this book

- as compared with other books?
- as compared with other activities?

What do I hope for from this book?

Why am I reading it?

What might I get out of it?

How will it help me to be a more effective servant of Jesus?

Arrive at point where we are saying, “I *want* to read this book because X” where *want* is intense because X is huge.

Our *state* makes a massive difference to our reading

State as “how we feel”

Comprised of / ‘determined’ by what’s going on with our body and our mind

(i) as start to read – see above

plus - set of relevant states ... curious, resolved, excited (high energy? relaxed alertness?)

(ii) as continue to read

- Reminders of (i)
- The company we keep – practising the presence of Jesus
- Focussed attention: “Wherever you are, be all there”; This is It

- Making deals with yourself – email / getting out of your chair / doing *anything* else ...
- Changing our *state*:
- change what we do with our body
 - posture, breathing, movement, smile, music, walk, anchors
 - change what we do with our mind
 - beliefs
 - identity, mission, rules, metaphors, expectations
 - questions
 - focus of attention / switching channels

Being active and engaged vastly increases what we get out of our reading

- a) **Preview** (see below). If I was told that this was a very good book but that it would self-destruct in 30 minutes, what would I do?

Thirty minutes with a book:

- 0-1: Why am I reading this? What do I want out of it?
- 2-4: How many pages, read blurb, look at contents page - what's in the chapters?
- 5-6: So what is the book about - "tell" someone else / jot it down
- 7-11: Preview - look at preface, intro, summary, conclusion etc - read interesting paragraphs
- 12-15: Flick through the book - turn lots of pages, notice things, shout out words, headings, italicized sentences etc
- 16-17: Decide on which 5 pages which give you best sense of the book
- 18-27: Read those five pages
- 28-30: Put on paper and say out loud what the book is about, what you have gained from it, why it might be worth more time, and one key learning/idea/quote so far

- Compare - what would you have gained from simply reading the first 15-40 pages of it?
- Do you now have a good idea of whether or not it is worth reading more slowly? All of it, or just some parts of it?
- Even if you now read it from beginning to end, unless it is a very short book, you will read it in less time - i.e. you will recover the 30 minutes you spent on this.

- b) **The main reading** (you've decided it's worth more time; you want to read in more detail)

- goals (specific, measurable, attractive, realistic, timed)
- asking questions:

How can I use this? How can I put this into my own words?
 What is the speaker/writer saying?
 Is it true? Why?
 What are the conclusions? Do I agree?
 How does this relate to what I already know?
 What are the most important things?

What are the author's
 Assumptions
 Evidence
 Illustrations (Information?)
 Opinions
 Unique Points

Turn headings into questions

- saying things out loud
 - conduct a running commentary in your head
 - visualize the verbal - esp metaphors and illustrations
 - vocalize difficult passages – in someone else's voice
 - interact with the argument
- writing things down

- decide on the size of “chunk”
 - how often do you need to stop and
 - write down the main/ most interesting idea
 - summarize what’s going on out loud?
- marking the book – sparing, consistent, *only* if it’s yours!
 - main idea/most interesting lead of page summarized at top
 - agree / disagree / nice / important / very important / makes me think X
- stay flexible
 - speed up / slow down (there is a time for *v-e-r-y s-l-o-w r-e-a-d-i-n-g*)
 - skip chunks
 - give up

c) **Review** (after each session and after each book)

- read marked sections
- second rapid read
- main points / gains
- score out of 10 and why
- tell someone
- common-place book / blog

Some other issues

1. Reading “faster”

Already

- save money by not buying unwanted “bargains”
- maximize the “ability to use” units
- preview
- attitude

Additionally

- externals – light, noise, posture, glasses
- NO vocalizing
- chunks, not words - half lines
- hand-movements
- peripheral vision
- rhythm
- push, push, push – always slightly faster than feels comfortable

2. When other people want to lend you a book (or worse, give you a copy)

- treat it like any other “interruption”
 - under God’s providence
 - don’t resent it
 - there may be a treasure in there
- depends on the person and how you best serve them

2. Reading on-screen

3. Marking books which are not yours

4. Awkward questions

Q. Have you read all these?

A. “I’ve read some of them twice”

Q. Have you read X?

A. “Well, I can’t say I’ve read every word, no”

Q. How come only the first few pages are marked?

A. "Pareto Rule, my friend, Pareto rule"

5. Planning your reading

- how much to read
- what to read

6. Bible, Bible, Bible

- a) *because* "a book is a person speaking" Psalm 1 / Joshua 1 / Deuteronomy 17; Psalm 19, 119
- b) Hafiz - noun - (Islam) a title for a person who knows the Koran by heart [Etymology: from Persian, from Arabic *hafiz*, from *hafiza* to guard] Also known as: ahadith (pl.); alternate spellings: hadeeth
- c) Canon II of the Second Council of Nicea (AD 787):

That he who is to be ordained a Bishop must be steadfastly resolved to observe the canons, otherwise he shall not be ordained.

When we recite the psalter, we promise God: "I will meditate upon thy statutes, and will not forget thy words." It is a salutary thing for all Christians to observe this, but it is especially incumbent upon those who have received the sacerdotal dignity. Therefore we decree, that every one who is raised to the rank of the episcopate shall know the psalter by heart, so that from it he may admonish and instruct all the clergy who are subject to him. And diligent examination shall be made by the metropolitan whether he be zealously inclined to read diligently, and not merely now and then, the sacred canons, the holy Gospel, and the book of the divine Apostle, and all other divine Scripture; and whether he lives according to God's commandments, and also teaches the same to his people. For the special treasure of our high priesthood is the oracles which have been divinely delivered to us, that is the true science of the Divine Scriptures, as says Dionysius the Great. And if his mind be not set, and even glad, so to do and teach, let him not be ordained. For says God by the prophet, "Thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me."