

# Bible Said To Bring Personal Message If Studied Properly

By LOUIS CASSELS  
UPI Correspondent  
A pastor once startled his congregation by asking: "How many of you would like to receive a personal message from God to guide you in dealing with your problems and help you make sense out of life?"

After some hesitation, nearly every hand was raised. "Very well," said the pastor. "I'll tell you where you can find such a message."

He reached into the pulpit and held up a Bible.

"You may have to read this book fairly extensively before you encounter the message that is addressed especially to you," he said.

"But I can guarantee that if you read it faithfully, God will speak to you through it, just as genuinely and personally as if He had sent you a telegram."

**Basic Fact**  
That pastor was neither a fanatic nor a fundamentalist. He was trying to communicate a basic fact of Christian experience, on which there is a striking degree of agreement among liberals and conservatives. Protestant and Catholics, ancient church fathers and modern theologians.

"The Bible not only tells us how God sought His people in the past; it is also a means by which He seeks us out today," says Prof. Robert McAfee Brown of Stanford University. "Not only are God's demands and promises brought home to us, but God Himself speaks to us as we take the Bible seriously. It is for this reason that we speak of the Bible as 'the word of God.'"

**Have No Answer**  
Why God the Holy Spirit should choose to communicate with men through the pages of the ancient book which contains a little bit of everything, from authentic history to folk myths and from sublime hymns of praise to passionately erotic love poems, is a question that Christians cannot answer. They can only affirm that it happens, and invite skeptics to try for themselves whether it be so.

Some people unfortunately try to reduce the great mystery to an absurd kind of magic. They open the Bible at random, stab their fingers at a verse, and expect therein to find God's instant "answer" to whatever is troubling them at that moment. The notion that divine guidance is dispensed in such a mechanical, penny-in-the-slot manner is an insult to God and puts the Bible on a par with a ouija board.

Less blasphemous, but equally ineffective, is the casual kind of "Scripture-nibbling" in which the reader jumps around from one part of the Bible to another, without plan or purpose, reading perhaps a psalm tonight, a chapter from one of the Gospels tomorrow night, and one of St. Paul's letters next week—or next month.

**Must Be Studied**  
Dr. Frederick C. Grant, a leading Biblical scholar of the Episcopal Church, says that those who would hear "the voice of the Lord speaking through the Scriptures" must be willing not merely to read that Bible, but to study it, seriously and systematically.

"We are frequently advised to read the Bible with our own personal needs in mind, and to look for answers to our private questions," says Dr. Grant. "This is good as far it goes... but better still is the advice to study the Bible objectively, and write down what it teaches, summarizing the thought in our own language but without regard—first of all—to our own subjective needs."

"Let the great passages fix themselves in our memory. Let them stay there permanently like bright beacons, launching their powerful shafts of light upon life's problems—our own and everyone's—as they illumine new ones, now another dark area of human life. This we should do first, making sure that the meaning we derive from the text is the one that is really there and not our private wishful substitute."

"Following such a method, we discover that the Bible does 'speak to our condition' and meet our needs, not just occasionally, or when some emergency arises, but continually."

The foregoing advice is from Dr. Grant's superb little book, "How to Read the Bible," which is now available in a Collier paperback (at 95 cents).

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## Hulteng Named To Alumni Honors List

Eugene—John L. Hulteng, dean of the University of Oregon school of journalism, has been named to an honors list for distinguished alumni of Columbia university's graduate school of journalism. The honors list was chosen from names submitted by alumni-at-large and approved by the 50th anniversary committee of the graduate school of journalism.

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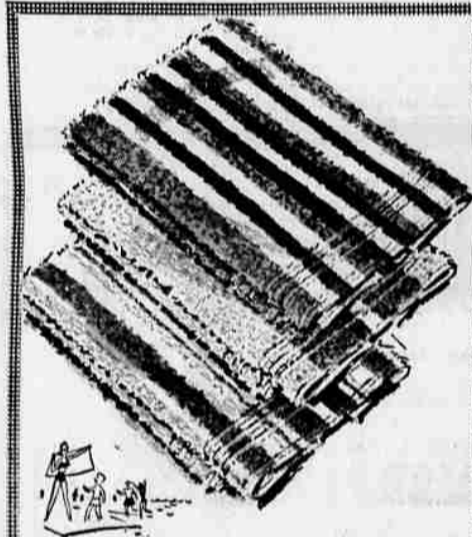
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