

How to be a Levite
Mt. Haley Church of God
April 21, 2013
Topic: Reading Scripture in Worship¹

➤ **An introductory passage: 2 Kings 23:1-2**

In the 16th century, the printing press and Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German (the vernacular) made the Bible accessible to everyday people. For many centuries before that time, people depended on someone to read the scriptures aloud, so all could hear and understand.

➤ **We are called to bring good news: Isaiah 52:7-10**

The public reading of scripture is an important part of worship and ought to be performed with careful preparation.

Desired qualifications for a scripture reader:

- Depth and commitment of faith
- Native talent
- Desire and the feeling of call
- Adequate training
- Accomplishment or proved aptitude
- A mandate from the faith community
- A commitment to continuing education

"This is the Word of the Lord" – these are trustworthy words that come from the voice of God.

- Scripture read aloud is nothing less than the Word of God presented as if in God's voice.
- To serve as God's own voice and to be the bearer of a word of timeless truth – such a charge may seem too great a responsibility. (See Moses's reaction in Exodus 4:10-12.)
- God's Word will not be silenced, and God still calls people forth to proclaim it.
- Why work hard at preparing to read scripture? Because in public worship, ill-prepared readings have an effect on people's spiritual welfare. We need words we can count on. We need readers we can trust to speak God's Word so that its truth shines forth. We do not attempt to read the Scriptures well in worship merely to honor the Word. We attend to these things carefully because people's faith is at stake.

Abandonment: Get out of the way, and allow the words to come through with clarity!

Two fundamental steps to good preparation:

- Approach the text in prayer.
- Study the text and its surrounding material.

¹ Many ideas here come from Clayton J. Schmit, *Public Reading of Scripture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002).

What do you need to know about a passage?

- Author and setting (who wrote it, and why?)
- Form (what genre of literature is it?)
- Source (does it contain quotations?)
- Audience (who was intended to hear it?)
- Textual environment (how does this fit into the book's overall picture?)
- Alternative readings and translations (does it read differently in other versions?)

Where can you look?

- Reference Bibles or Study Bibles
- Parallel translations
- Gospel parallels
- Bible dictionaries
- Bible commentaries
- www.blueletterbible.org
 - K = correlating verses
 - C = lexicon/concordance in Hebrew or Greek
 - L = commentaries
 - I or music notes = associated images or hymns
 - V = versions/translations
 - D = dictionary aids



Jhn 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

How to read scripture in worship:

- Approach the pulpit in an attitude of prayer.
- Introduce the passage by stating its location (book, chapter, verses). Examples:
 - "The Old Testament reading is from Isaiah chapter 58, verses 1 through 8."
 - "Today I will read from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 58, verses 1 through 8."
 - "Isaiah 58, verses 1 through 8. God is speaking to his people."
- Pay attention to your body:
 - Posture (stand up straight and comfortably)
 - Breathing (plan ahead of time where to take breaths)
 - Vowel sounds and consonants (don't swallow vowels; use consonants carefully)
 - Use of pitch (high, medium, or low)
 - Exaggerate your efforts – slightly!
 - Eye contact
 - Facial expressions

Other elements to consider:

- Rate of delivery (fast or slow)
- Inflection (up or down)
- Volume (loud or soft)
- Pause
- Phrasing
- Emphasis