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Editorial

READING THAT REVIVES AND REFORMS

hether in the secular world or spiritual sphere, any revolution or reformation can be attributed to the right use of literature. It's a well-known saying about many of the communist countries that it was missionaries who taught the people to read, but it was the communists who gave them literature to read. That was one of the reasons behind the widespread growth of such ideologies.

Examples

In the Old Testament, the revival under Josiah in Judah was the discovery of the law and its reading. (2Kings 22:8ff). So was the awakening among the Jews who returned from captivity during the days of Nehemiah and Ezra (Neh. 8). Church history also confirms this reality that whenever the people of God sincerely read and study God's word, it leads to renewal and restoration.

In this background, we ought to be concerned about the declining interest in reading among the common people. As the secular world is alarmed at the deteriorating situation, God's people must also be cautious and inculcate reading habits among the saints, especially the new generation.

Exploration

So, for this month, we are focussing on 'Diminishing Reading Habits'. In this article, we begin with the reasons why this topic is significant and conclude with a look at the farreaching outcome of reading especially in the lives of leaders. Sad to notice that many forget writing and reading are also part of God's command for His people. Brother **John Lee's** study focusing on 'Developing a Reading Habit' is instructive. Though brief, he deals with the reasons for scripture reading and the various ways one ought to read. In the end, his practical suggestions will help all who are struggling to maintain the right reading pattern.

Brother **Tom Johns** reflects upon the era when there were few books. He beautifully presents a comparison of the time when reading materials were rare and the advent of printing and publications. It's challenging to recall that it was literature, particularly the printed word of God that removed the social, moral, and spiritual darkness that prevailed in many parts of the world, even in our own land.

Brother Biju Itty's practical tips for readers are thought-provoking as they come with the support of the 'prince of the preachers', C. H. Spurgeon. The author's tips are threefold: 'Think and meditate, read good books, and supply food for thought!' Brother SurajInamdar briefly focuses on the benefits of reading. He challenges the readers to be aware of the consequences of neglecting reading and presents a few valuable outcomes of reading, especially from the secular point of view. Finally, as usual the brief illustration, sermon outlines, and useful quotations will help those who study this subject seriously. It's our sincere prayer that through the reading of these pages, many will be encouraged to read and study seriously and systematically. It is such committed learners who become a blessing to one another bringing glory to God. Thank you once again for your support and encouragement.



DIMINISHING Reading Habits

ne of the worrisome outcomes of the digital revolution world over is the ever-declining reading habits, especially of the new generation. Educationists and social reformers vociferously warn against this modern phenomenon for they think it will create a society of distorted values, creativity, and analytical thinking. Since 1995, UNESCO has celebrated April 23 as the World Reading Day. Different countries also have their own 'National Reading Days' to promote literature and reading among their population. When the secular world is so concerned about this social anomaly, how much more God's people must be serious about this issue!

THE IMPORTANCE

a) Reading is God's command for His people

Not only the LORD wrote the law initially (Exo. 24:12; 34:1; Deu. 10:4), He commanded His chosen servants to write and make the scripture available for His people to read (Exo. 34:27; Num. 5:23; Rev. 1:3, 11). We ought to be grateful to those writers from Moses to Apostle John who faithfully recorded the Word of God for us. There are plenty of scripture passages instructing the believers to consistently read and meditate the scripture (Deu. 6: 6-9; 11:18; 17:18, 19; Jos.



1:8; Isa. 34:16, etc.). That means our effort to write or read is in direct fulfilment of God's purposes for His people.

b) Godly and effective leaders were exceptional readers.

Whether in the secular field or the spiritual realm, one common factor that we can notice in successful leaders is that they are all enthusiastic readers. Kings in Israel were required to be readers, Deu. 17:19, 20. One of the reasons behind the success of Joshua can be attributed to his faithful reading of the law, Josh. 1:8. King Solomon was not only a reader but also an able writer. He taught his son to learn from his writings and be careful in choosing books, Ecc. 12:12. Apostle Paul loved books so much that even as he was waiting for his final judgment and subsequent execution in the Roman jail, he told Timothy to bring his books and parchments, 2Tim. 4:13. Paul's ability to quote freely from the secular writers of his time testify to his wide reading (Acts 17:28; 1Cor. 15:33; Tit. 1:12).

Paul also commends Timothy for his acquaintance with the sacred writings from childhood and encourages him to continue to read and study (2 Tim. 3:15; 2:15; 1 Tim. 4:13).

Even church history proves that the men of God who could influence and mould generations for true Christian life were readers. Remember, readers become skilled writers, thinkers, and influencers. Only eternity can reveal the value of such reformers who protected and promoted the truth for the precept and practice of the saints.

c) The far-reaching results of reading

Another fact that should challenge one to be a serious reader is the benefits reading offers. There are plenty of scripture references that speak of the benefits of reading God's word. We shall consider only one portion briefly where the rulers of Israel have been exhorted to read, Deu. 17:19, 20.

"And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to **fear** the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his **heart may not be lifted** above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment **to the right hand or to the left**, and that he may **prolong his days** in his kingdom, he and his **children** in the midst of Israel."

i. Increased knowledge. V. 19a "learn"

The more we read, the more we learn the divine precepts. Such enlarged awareness and understanding of truth help one to make wise decisions (Psa. 119:98, 99).

ii. Enriched attitude. "fear the Lord… his heart may not be lifted"

Constant meditation of scripture automatically moulds and develops our mind-set towards God and one another. One can easily lose the fear of God and become arrogant, but regular reading helps to check this.

iii. Balanced lifestyle. "may not turn aside from...right...to the left"

It is possible that one may be sincere and true, yet become narrow-minded and stiff-necked for lack of knowledge. But as we read a variety of views and thoughts, it gives light on different aspects of life. That saves us from taking extreme positions which is often unsafe.

iv. Success and prosperity. "He may prolong his days"

Israel's future ruler's success was linked to his faithful reading of the law. The same thing was repeated to Joshua (Josh 1:8). The success of a ruler may involve many things, but the Lord tells here that his reading of the scripture plays a big role in it.

v. Blessings to posterity. "he and his children"

Parents who love reading not only enjoy all the above-mentioned benefits but also influence their children to lead a godly way of life. Thus, the blessings of reading are passed on to future generations. It's foolish to assume that parents can waste their time with digital devices and expect their children to read and study with discipline and dedication. Of course, there are many more benefits like personality development, improved mental health and communication skills etc., which we may consider elsewhere.

Read Right

Once a lawyer asked the Lord Jesus, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ replied, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" (Luke 10:25, 26 ESV). That means it's not enough to read, but we have to read right; comprehend and rightly interpret what is written. Then only we can wisely apply the same into our life to benefit from what we read.

The Ethiopian official's words are noteworthy in this context, "How can I, unless someone guides me?". He was answering Philip's question, "Do you understand what you are reading?"



(Acts 8:30, 31) He sought the help of the evangelist to learn the meaning of what he was reading. As a result, not only did he understand the passage but obeyed those precious truths and went his way rejoicing (Acts 8: 30-39). This shows the importance of reading a variety of books and periodicals that will help us understand the scripture passages that are often obscure to us.

Brevity of Life

As we are well aware of the brevity of life and our busy schedules, it is important to discipline ourselves to find time to read and study our chosen topics. One thing is sure: passionate learners are readers. Not only do they progress and prosper but also influence others for the better. Your interest in reading this article till this line itself proves your passion for reading. That means God is slowly but surely developing you to be a blessing to many, because readers are learners and they become inspiring examples in the days to come. **G&P**

STUDY Bro. John Lee. AP

HOW CAN I DEVELOP A BIBLE READING HABIT?

ngaging with God's word is crucial for spiritual growth. Developing habits that allow the word of Christ to dwell in us richly involves more than just occasional reading. It means integrating scripture into our daily lives and making it a central part of our routine.



REASONS TO DEVELOP A BIBLE READING HABIT

1. Scripture and the Saviour

That's how the two important purposes in God's heart would be fulfilled in one's life, 1 Tim 2:4 'Salvation' is in the person of Christ and growing in the knowledge of the person and work of Christ is the key to the knowledge of truth. He is the central theme of the Bible (Lk 24:27, 44) Of course, Christ is the truth personified!

2. Scripture and it's Sweetness

- Another reason to cultivate a Bible reading habit is to grow in love for God's Word. Psalm 119 illustrates the attitude we should have towards Scripture:
- Verse 16: "I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word."
- Verse 48: "I will lift my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes."
- Verse 97: "Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day."
- Verse 103: "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"
- Verse 131: "I open my mouth and pant because I long for your commandments."

Reflect on how these verses align with your thoughts and actions regarding Scripture. If you feel discouraged because your attitudes and desires don't always match these ideals, remember you're not alone. Let these verses inspire you to persevere, knowing that the benefits of engaging with Scripture are richly described throughout this psalm and the entire Bible.

3. Scripture that Sanctifies

It's the Sword in our Spiritual Warfare. We have to store it up in our hearts, to fight against Sin.

4. Scripture and the Spiritual Survival

When we read the Bible we hear God speaking to us, showing us His will and character, equipping us for every good work, strengthening us with spiritual food in our journey towards home, etc.

WAYS OF READING A. DOCTRINAL

(a) Discerningly:

Study Scripture carefully to understand and correctly interpret its teachings, comparing related passages to form accurate conclusions

(b) Doctrinally:

Understand the major doctrines of the Bible to build a sound faith and effective preaching. Refer to passages like II Timothy 1:10, 1:13; II Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; Colossians 2:7.

(c) Dispensationally:

Recognize your place within God's current plan to align with His purposes and avoid working at cross purposes with Him.

B. PRACTICAL (i) Diligently:

Read with determination and avoid distractions. This might mean adjusting your schedule, such as waking up earlier, to ensure consistent and focused study.

(ii) Devotionally:

Allow the Bible to speak to your own heart and address your spiritual needs, which will better equip you to help others.

(iii) Dependently:

That is reading the Bible humbly and prayerfully, depending upon the Spirit in prayer. You can add Ps 119:18.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING READING HABIT

1) Pick a *Time* that Works Best for You

Choose a time for Bible reading that suits your schedule and when you're most alert. Mornings are ideal for many, but evenings or midday might work better for others. Be prepared to adjust as needed; some days or seasons may require flexibility. If your usual time doesn't work, adapt and give yourself the grace to find alternative moments for reading.

2) Choose an Achievable Goal

Set realistic goals when establishing a Bible reading habit. Instead of jumping to long, intensive study sessions, start small. Begin with a short daily reading—such as a chapter or a paragraph—to build the habit. Once established, gradually increase your commitment, incorporating deeper study and additional practices like Scripture memory or reading extra passages.

3) Overcoming Obstacles

Reflect on what has previously hindered your Bible reading habit and address those issues.

4) Don't Worry About Having a *"Perfect"*QuietTime

The value of Bible study lies in your dedication and consistency, not in the aesthetics of your journaling. Whether your notes are neatly penned or scribbled in the margins, what matters is showing up and engaging with God's Word.

If others see your Bible in the future, let them be inspired by your commitment rather than impressed by perfect handwriting. And remember, it's okay if your Bible time isn't always quiet; faithfulness is what honours God.

5) Don't Let Your *Failures* Hold You Back

Don't let the fear of imperfection prevent you from building a Biblereading habit. Missing a day doesn't mean failure; any time spent in the Bible is valuable. Avoid letting perfectionism derail your efforts. Instead, focus on persistence and make adjustments as needed to support your success.

If you're following a reading plan, simply resume where you left off rather than trying to catch up. Keep trying and stay committed, even if things aren't perfect.

6) Stay *Accountable*

Find someone to help keep you accountable with your Bible reading habit, whether it's through regular check-ins or shared goals. Use phone alarms and reminders to ensure you don't forget your reading time, setting one for your planned reading time and another for later in the day if needed. Staying accountable helps maintain consistency and reduces the likelihood of regret from skipping your Bible time.

CAUTION

Isaiah's message to the king was clear: "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all" (Isa. 7:9 NIV). In times of crisis or threat, it's crucial to rely completely on God's truth, which should be deeply ingrained in us. Our faith must be so rooted in the truth of God's Word that we are firmly convinced of its reliability.

BLESSINGS

This is the first of seven blessings mentioned by Apostle John in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7). Revelation 1:3 states, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near." G&P

ANECDOTE

READING HABITS OF ULTRA-SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE

n article on 'Medium' asks, "Want to know one habit ultra-successful people have in common? They read a lot." Warren Buffett would read 600-1000 pages a day. Bill Gates reads 50 books a year. Mark Cuban reads three hours a day. When asked how he learned to build rockets, Elon Musk said, "I read books." But one thing that marks their reading is education. They don't read to be entertained; they read to be educated. "They believe that books are a gateway to learning and knowledge."

All of these people live crazy busy lives, yet they see the value in reading. How much more so for the Christian who can read the Word of God? If you want to make progress in the Christian life, do one thing: read the Word. Of course, that Word also tells us to do one more thing: obey the Word.

Source: Andrew Merle / Preaching Today

OUTLINE-1

PRIVATE STUDY

In connection with private Scripture studythere are five important things:



Reading	: 111m 4:13	
Searching	: Acts 17:11	
Finding	: Psa 69: 162	2

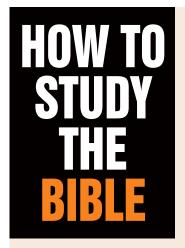
- Meditating H
- Practising James 1: 22 – 25

Jer 15: 16

13

-S.J.B.C

OUTLINE-2



- 1. With a regenerate mind, 1Cor 2:14
- 2. With a willing mind, John 7:17
- 3. With an obedient mind, James 1: 21, 22
- 4. With a teachable mind, Mathew 11:25
- 5. With an unprejudiced mind, #xo 3:5
- 6. With open eyes, Psa 119: 18
- 7. Remembering it's God's word, 1Thess 2:13 *Therefore:*
- a. Submit your judgement always and unhesitatingly;
- b. Bank on its promises without discounting;
- c. Obey immediately and exactly no questions (Josh 1:16)

-HYP

REFLECTIONS

Bro. Tom Johns, Dallas, TX



THE DARKNESS PREVAILED

Just a few centuries ago, books were scarcely available anywhere in the world, especially in the Asian and African continents. Wherever the printed books were rare, the darkness hung over the horizon of human hearts. Myths and fairytales baffled curious minds and shaped cultural norms. The societies formed their preferred practices according to the impulses of the dominant individuals, generally to fulfill and satisfy their selfish desires.

The availability of printed materials threatened the very existence of the so-called ruling of upper class. Historians often designate the period between the 6th and 14th centuries as the Dark Age.

The light is commonly referred to as the presence of truth, justice, and knowledge and, darkness equated to falsehood, injustice, and superstitions. Freedom for independent thinking and opportunities to share the resulting wisdom with others generally increased, and focused and true wisdom flourished. Before the arrival of Western Missionaries to India, we had been practicing a barbaric act called 'Sati,' when the widow of the diseased husband is also tossed into the funeral pyre, to be burned alive.

There were infant sacrifices to please the Deities, for which the upper-class people used the children of the lower class. Slavery prevailed all over the world well into the 19th and even into the 20th centuries.

There was a time in the Eastern culture when women were denied education; the sick ones were buried alive to prevent spreading the disease instead of trying to cure them.

THE SUNRISE

The influx of printed material and books contributed greatly to removing these barbaric acts and outlawing such practices. The printing of the Bible in English and then into several other local languages tremendously



helped generate a thirst for knowledge and gain godly wisdom through its pages. One of the greatest minds of the 4th century was St. Augustine of Hippo who formulated many of the Christian

doctrines. Before his conversion, he was deeply troubled spiritually and was unable to find joy in his life. One day, in a mysterious way, he heard the refrain from a little child, "Take it and read, take it and read." He felt that it was coming directly from heaven and pointedly sent to him.

Later Augustine wrote like this. "I stemmed my flood of tears and stood up, telling myself that this could only be a divine command to open my book of Scripture and read the first passage on which my eyes should fall. So, I hurried back and seized the book of Paul's epistle and opened it, and in silence, I read the first page my eyes fell".

The passage he read was Romans 13:13-14. "...Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries. Rather, arm yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ; spend no more thought on nature and nature's appetites."

He continued to write about this, "As I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled."

All these and everything about such a great man of God began by reading what was written. The words and books are powerful. John Piper writes, "One of the great rediscoveries of the Reformation – especially of Martin Luther – was that the Word of God comes to us in the form of a book. In other words, Luther grasped this powerful fact; God preserves the experience of salvation and holiness from generation to generation using a book of revelation, not bishop of Rome – The word of God comes to us in a book." [21 Servants of Sovereign Joy by John Piper]

AN ERA BEFORE COMPUTERS AND INTERNET

It is hard to imagine by the current generation about a time when there was no internet, mobile phones, texting, or emails. Many of the great minds and innovative pioneers, all worked without such modern amenities.

In Kerala, one such genius mind lived about a century ago and his name was K V Simon. He started as a young boy with a thirst for reading anything and everything he could get his hands on. But books were so rare in those days.

In his biography, written by Mr. T A Kurian M.A of Saugor, M. P, graphically describes Simon's passion for reading throughout his life. He was known to have a book with him, under the dim light of a kerosene lamp, and would usually fall asleep with the book resting on his chest. K V Simon acquired great knowledge and spiritual wisdom, although the circumstances were never conducive to a productive life. Despite that, he composed a large volume of poems depicting the whole book of Genesis and close to three hundred hymns in Malayalam, the language of Kerala. These were all accomplished without computers, modern bright lights, or a steady chair or desk. He gained knowledge through reading books and of course, with the help of the Holy Spirit; and left several books that he authored for the coming generation.

THE MODERN ERA

Now, we come to this modern era. We like everything visual and, or audible. The art of reading is becoming more of an ancient thing. It is necessary to recognize the modern conveniences of this electronic age and make use of it.

Only time will tell if the digital library can ever leave the same deep imprint upon human minds as the printed versions once had left and blessed many. It is of greater significance, whether through printed or electronic



media that we devote our time and efforts to understand what God demands from us and make it a priority to be consumed with such thoughts.

That understanding would come only from reading or hearing and understanding the Word of God. May God grant us the drive to 'do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.' [Micah 6:8] **G&P**

PRACTICAL-1

Bro. Biju Itty, Surat

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR READERS

Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic, are the 3Rs traditionally regarded as the fundamentals of education, and the building blocks of a well-rounded person. A mature Christian will benefit from good reading and can edify others through quality writing. And he must count, reckon, and multiply much now, to give an account before the white throne of Christ. Let's talk a bit about the first 'R'reading. Take and Eat - Think and meditate. Spurgeon says in his sermon, 'How to read the Bible': "Our heavenly Father would educate us for heaven—by making us think our way into divine mysteries..... Do not many of you read the Bible in a very hurried way—just a little bit, and off you go?.... Well, I tell you your reading is miserable reading, dead reading, unprofitable reading; it is not reading at all." Paul exhorts Timothy, "Till I come, devote yourself to [public and private] reading, to exhortation (preaching and personal appeals), and to teaching and instilling doctrine." (1 Tim. 4:13 [AMPC]). Again, in v.15. "Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all." This is the key to making tangible spiritual progress. As we read, we must pray that the Holy Spirit would unlock the hidden mysteries of the inspired word. Surely, He will glorify Christ, for He will take of what is Christ's and declare it to us (Jn.16:14).

TAKE ALL HELP – READ GOOD SUGGESTIVE BOOKS

Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I understand unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. In Neh.8:8, the Levites "read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading."

Spurgeon says, "We will not hear anybody, and we will not read anything except the Book itself, neither will we accept any light, except that which comes in through a crack in our own roof. We will not see by another man's candle, we would sooner remain in the dark." Elsewhere, he says:

"...The man who never reads will never be read; he who never quotes will never be quoted. He, who will not use the thoughts of other men's brains, proves that he has no brains of his own. You need to read." Spurgeon himself read "six meaty books a week". No wonder why he is called the prince of preachers.

TAKE AND GIVE – SUPPLY FOOD FOR THOUGHT

For centuries, Satan, through the Catholic Church and several governments, has prevented people from reading the Bible. And the world at large provides enough distractions and alternatives. Our foolishness in avoiding God's word and good books deprives us and others of the necessary spiritual nourishment for victory over sin. We might have had far greater numbers of conversions in our churches if our preachers and evangelists were provided good books as appropriate mental food.

Think and meditate! Read good suggestive books! Supply food for thought! **G&P**

"If you would benefit, read with humility, simplicity and faith, and never seek the fame of being learned."

-Thomas a Kempis



BENEFITS OF READING

"...and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read." (Luk. 4:16 NASB)

r. George Martin has rightly said, "A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies". When we were teenagers, elderly people would always advise us, "Read to succeed". During our school vacations, most of us have spent many hours in libraries reading books, magazines and novels. Fortunately, as we aged, so did our reading habits. Reading is a very good and beneficial habit. Youngsters need to inculcate this habit in their lives. Nowadays, this modern young generation can be seen as obsessed with physical and outward appearance, and they are seen to be more than willing to spend a fortune on those things. But they are not half as excited or willing to read even one book. The effect of this is that their emotional and intellectual growth is stunted. Reading is very important for our personality and character development.

There's one complaint from all around that in today's modern world, the increasing influence of Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, etc. has reduced people's habit of reading. Christian youths, too are affected by this. Their reading habits are below satisfactory. Today's youths have an excuse for jobs and studies for an escape.



Many of them don't even read the Scriptures for days at a stretch. Paul advised young Timothy, - "Until I come, give attention to.... 'Reading'. (1 Tim. 4:13). Paul also requested Timothy to bring the books and parchments (2 Tim. 4:13c). Paul, even in his busy schedule of gospel and ministries, preserved his fondness for reading.

The scholars have fashioned a list of Benefits of Reading:

1. CHANGES THE MENTALITY

Books make one travel the entire world while sitting at their homes. Stephen King said, "Books have a unique magic". Books expand our hesitant and narrow hearts. Not only does reading help in developing our brains, it also teaches us valuable life lessons. Books help us to know and learn about the hardships and troubles of the greats and the smalls of the world, which motivates and guides us to face our life problems with more positivity.

2. HELPS OVERCOME LONELINESS

Loneliness is one of the serious problems of today's age. A report claimed that loneliness is one of the main causes of death in many senior citizens. Every single person is busy in his or her life and work. The ones, who are not busy, are lonely. Many of them face the question of how to get rid of loneliness. "Books" can be a good solution to loneliness.

Dr Ambedkar said, "Due to a lack of friendships with people, I befriended books. As I kept reading on and on, I forgot about my loneliness". Famous English author, Ernest Hemingway said, "There is no friend as loyal as a book".

3. IMPROVES CONCENTRATION

Research has concluded that Mobile Phones, Tablets etc. have reduced man's concentration. While reading a book, our vision is focused on the pages for a prolonged time. If you have little kids, hand them attractive books and try to develop a love for books in them starting today! Parents have caused a long-term loss for their kids by handing them a mobile phone from a young age.

4. IMPROVED VOCABULARY

Spoken language, Conversation skills, and writing skills, all can be improved only by reading. Reading helps us to improve our vocabulary and get trained in any language. In conclusion, inculcating reading habits can lead to overall improvement in your personality. Your mental and emotional health improves too. If you're still a stranger to this wonderful habit, grab a book today and start reading!

"Show me an army of leaders and I'll show you an army of readers."

- Napoleon

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."

- Richard Steele



GRACE & PEACE - ONLINE

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