

The Word of God

Many years ago God sent us to a new country to start a new work. Our ministry was unsalaried so we trusted the Lord for all our needs. In the process of setting up we ran out of finance very quickly until one day we had nothing. Having prayed together, we got on with some jobs around the house wondering and a bit fearful about our predicament. I was cutting a hedge outside the house we rented that ran alongside a main road. Suddenly a \$5 bill just flew over the hedge to where I was standing. There was no-one around to ask and see if they were the owner! So I took it in and told Pip and we were amazed. We thanked God and wondered how to use it. Then he spoke to us through a passage from Exodus 16 that one of us had been reading that morning. God had provided for the Israelites in the wilderness with enough food for each day, but when they tried to make the day's provision stretch over to the next day, the passage tells us that *'it bred worms and stank'* (v20). Through this passage the Lord was saying to us that he will provide what we need, but that if we like the Israelites because of fear store up today's provision for tomorrow, then our faith will go bad just as it did for the Israelites bread. So instead of going to buy bread and butter to last us many days we went to a restaurant and bought hamburgers and used up it up completely! Needless to say as we continued to follow his leading for us regarding faith for finance, more provision arrived. God taught us an important lesson from his word.

The Word of God itself testifies to its life and power in our lives.

Hebrews 4:12

'For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

The above story illustrates how God's word speaks directly into our lives and situations. The scriptures we read in the bible that morning taught us a foundational lesson about trusting God for in our needs. Indeed, God's word is the foundation for everything in every believer's life.

Matthew 7:24-27.

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rains descended, the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house and it fell. And great was its fall."

The two men in this passage experienced the same storms but the difference between them was the foundation they built their homes on. This passage outlines to us that the word of God is a firm foundation that will hold us through all the storms life will throw at us.

The Word of God provides the foundation and the building blocks of our faith.

Acts 20:32

‘So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace which is able to build you up...’

Because the Word of God is foundational, it is a distinguishing feature of the believer’s life.

The following verse explains this.

John 14:23

‘...If anyone loves me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make Our home with him.’

1. Keeping God’s word is what distinguishes the disciple of Christ from others.
2. Keeping God’s word is the test of someone’s love for God.
3. In Keeping God’s word, God establishes His presence within.

Because God is the source, the Word of God comes from outside our earthly dimension.

Isaiah 55:8

‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.’

The Word of God holds benefit for every aspect of life.

Note the benefits from this next passage.

Psalms 19:7-11

‘The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold. Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them your servant is warned. And in keeping them there is great reward.’

Our ongoing salvation and that of others depends on the inspiring and instructive power of the Word.

1 Timothy 4:16 *‘Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine (truths). Continue in them for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you’*

2 Timothy 3:16 *‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness’*

The state of our hearts determines the effect of the Word of God in our lives.

James 1:21 *‘Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.’*

Here we see that for the word of God to bear fruit in our lives we must first lay aside two things – filthiness and wickedness. In short, we are to lay aside a delight in immorality and evil thought and replace this with ‘meekness’ or humility. This issue of humility is associated with the fear or respect of the Lord. This type of fear means to awe, delight, to be devoted

to the Lord above all other. These next two verses outline the importance of humility and respect for God in order to receive from him.

Psalm 25:9, 12

v9 – *‘the humble He guides in justice and the humble He teaches his way’*

v12 – *‘Who is the man that fears the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses’.*

Growing to understand the Bible

1. Read it

The bible is composed of 66 books, by 40 different authors, using different types of writing. It is not always easy to understand. Do not get frustrated when you read things you don't understand. When you don't understand don't reject it, leave it and move on and make a note to study later. A suggestion for a first starting point would be the gospel of John.

2. Study it

Reading is not the same as studying. Sometimes reading without studying can result in wrong interpretation. There are many helps to understand from bible dictionaries and bible commentaries in hard copy and on the internet.

Basic rules of interpretation – ask yourself

What does the passage say?

Who is it spoken/ written to?

What is the context in which the passage was written?

What did it mean to them in their day?

What does it mean to us/me today?

How do I apply it to us/me today?

3. Understand the difference between Logos and Rhema

Logos and rhema are two Greek words that are translated as 'word' in the New Testament. Both of these are important.

Logos refers mainly to the total inspired word of God and to Jesus himself.

2 Timothy 2:15

‘Be diligent to present yourself approved of God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word (logos) of truth.’

Rhema refers to a verse or portion of the bible that the Holy Spirit highlights to you in a personal way. For example, God spoke to us through Exodus 16 and it was a rhema word into our situation to use the provision the Lord gave for today and trust him for tomorrow.

Romans 10:17

‘So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (rhema) of God.’

4. Meditation

This is not to be confused with eastern meditation that attempts to empty the mind. Biblical meditation is about filling your mind with the word of God. The word 'meditate' in the bible has the same meaning as the word describing a cow when it 'chews the cud'. Once a cow

has eaten grass it will lie down and chew it for hours. It will then regurgitate the stomach contents and repeat the process until all the goodness is absorbed into its body producing milk. We can do the same with the word of God. When God highlights a scripture to you, commit it to memory (eat it), ponder it (chew on it), pray it and the Holy Spirit speak to you through it.

Psalm 1:2-3

'But his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither and whatever he does shall prosper.'

Finally, always pray and ask the Lord's help as you read/study the bible.

One of the first effects of receiving God's word is repentance. We look at this in the next session.

Suggested Further Study

Understanding Bible Literature

The Story Line of the Bible