

Priority: Scripture
March 15, 2020

Daily Devotions

Day One - What's so special about the Bible?

A search for "Holy Books" on Google will result in more than 300 titles, all claiming to be holy. Have you ever wondered what makes the Bible unique among so many others? What makes the Bible special? What makes it holy?

The Bible is not a single book; it's more like a library. It actually consists of 66 books, written over roughly 2,000 years by 40 different authors from three continents, who wrote in three different languages. It is the best-selling book of all time, with over five billion copies in print.

Anyone who searches for reasons to believe the Bible is reliable and accurate will have no difficulty finding ample research to support that conclusion. With minimal effort, one can quickly discover documentation of ancient Biblical manuscripts and other non-Christian ancient sources. This makes it impossible to logically conclude the Bible is unreliable or has been changed throughout history. For example, when you read the Bible you quickly realize that it is full of prophecies. There were 48 prophetic passages about the Jewish Messiah. Mathematician Peter Stoner determined that the statistical probability of one man fulfilling all 48 is 1 in 10 to the 157th power. (That's the numeral one followed by 157 zeroes!) Jesus Christ fulfilled every prophecy of the Messiah's first coming.

The Bible you have on your coffee table contains the same Old Testament that Jesus read and taught from in the synagogues. The New Testament you hear read in our church is the same that was circulated among the first churches soon after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

These facts certainly make the Bible unique, but uniqueness isn't the same thing as holy. What makes the Bible holy? The answer can be summed up with one verse, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Greek word used for the phrase "God-breathed" is theopneustos. Theo means God, and pneō means to breathe. Check out the definition of theopneustos from the Key Word Study Bible:

"Prompted by God, given by divine inspiration, breathed out by God, produced by the breath of God; Occurs only in 2 Timothy 3:16...in the literature from the time closest to when the New Testament was written, the word occurs only infrequently. In each of these uses, it always distinguishes what is divine or supernatural from what is natural or man-made. In the context of 2 Timothy 3:16, theopneustos describes Scripture as being 'God-breathed.'"

Consider the power and uniqueness of the breath of God. We see it in Genesis 2:7 when God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living being.

The Bible is the living, breathing word of God and *that's what makes it holy.*

There's no other book like it. No other book contains the very words of God. Throughout the pages of the Bible, God reveals himself as the God who sees, hears, knows, and rescues. The God who sees and hears you is the same God who wants you to see and hear him! How can you and I see and hear God? The answer may not be as complicated as you think. We see and hear God when we read our Bible.

Good news! It *is* possible to grow in your love for God's word. It *is* possible to enjoy reading Scripture, and the best news is this: God *will* reveal himself and speak to you through his word.

The number one-way God reveals himself is through his written word, the Bible.

If we want to know God, we must know our Bible.

If we want to love God more, we must love our Bible.

If we want to hear God speak, we must hear our Bible.

Be encouraged today, friend -

If we ask God to give us eyes to see him, he will!

If we ask God to give us ears to hear him, he will!

Questions for thought:

- What is your view of the Bible? How has this changed or not changed over time?
- What are the biggest obstacles preventing you from reading the Bible as much as you would like to?
- What are some practical changes you can implement to increase your time in God's word?
- Can you name someone who loves the Bible? What characteristics about them do you find appealing?

Recommendations for deeper study:

Books

Can We Trust the Gospels? by Peter J. Williams

Is the Bible Intolerant? By Amy Orr-Ewing

Podcast

Southland Christian Church/Sermon Series "Meat and Potatoes"

Website

Answers in Genesis: <https://answersingenesis.org/the-word-of-god/3-unity-of-the-bible/>

1<https://www.jewishvoice.org/read/blog/prophecies-about-messiahs-lineage-and-birth>

Day Two - What does the Bible say about itself?

What does the Bible say about itself? Quite a lot, actually. At The Creek, we want our opinions and beliefs about the Bible to be shaped by the Bible, not by the opinions or views of others or the popular notions of our culture. If we believe the Bible is the inspired word of God, then we will believe what the Bible says about itself.

Yesterday, we looked at a key verse in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed."

This verse teaches us an important truth – all Scripture comes from God. Therefore, we can take to heart what the Bible says about itself. Today, we will look at a few key verses from the Bible about the Bible. "For the word of God is living and active" (Hebrews 4:12).

Aren't you thankful the word of God isn't "dead and dormant"? Unlike a book of antiquity that has lost its relevance over time, *the Bible is as relevant today as it was the day it was penned.*

Not only is the word of God alive and active, but it's *also eternal*. "Your word O Lord is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens" (Psalm 119:89).

Jesus echoed this truth in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

(Think about that for a moment. Only Jesus gets to say that. If anyone else made the same claim, we would correctly label them insane!)

God's word always does what he says it will do:

"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:9-11).

The word of God is alive and active, eternal, and powerful. But wait, there's more!

Jesus Christ taught from the Scriptures. He upheld the Scriptures as the holy word of God. Most importantly, Jesus Christ said that all Scripture testifies about him. In discussion with some Jewish leaders, Jesus said, "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39-40).

The entire Bible is *all about Jesus*. Everything in Genesis 1 to Revelation 22 points to Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world.

Once again, we can boil it down to this:

If we want to know Jesus, we must know our Bible.

If we want to grow in our love for Jesus, we must grow in our love of his word.

Questions for thought:

- How do the claims of the Bible about itself shape your view of the Bible?
- Do you associate your knowledge and love of God with your knowledge and love of the Bible?

Day Three - Will reading the Bible make any difference in my life?

So far this week, we have seen what makes the Bible unique and holy, and what the Bible says about itself. The Bible claims to be:

- Holy
- Alive and active
- The primary way God reveals himself and makes himself known
- God-breathed
- Eternal
- How God's purpose is fulfilled
- Holistically pointing to Jesus

With all this in mind, we must ask ourselves this question: What difference will the Bible make in my life? Merely knowing about the Bible won't make a significant difference. Only when we apply the Bible to our lives will we see a considerable change. What exactly does that mean?

Consider the words Jesus spoke at the end of his longest recorded sermon, known as the "Sermon on the Mount", "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (Matthew 7:24-27).

Did you notice the winds blew and beat against both houses? The only difference was the foundation. The house built on the rock didn't fall, which begs the question, how do we build our house on the rock? Jesus answered this question, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice" (verse 24).

The word of God will permeate and make a difference in every area of our lives if we put it into practice. Our views and beliefs and overall worldview should be shaped by God's word. Consider where you turn for the answers to the following questions:

What do I believe about suffering?

Where do I turn when my heart is broken?

How do I handle an offense?

How can I learn to forgive?

What do I believe about sin?

How do I respond when my faith is being attacked?

What do I believe about the purpose of life?

Where do I turn when I experience doubts?

How should I treat those with whom I disagree?

How can I become a better spouse/parent/friend/employee/employer/child?

What do I believe about life after death?

Turning to God's inspired word for life's hardest questions will make a difference in our daily lives. In fact, the more we do so, the more it will become our primary focus in life.

As we learn to hear the voice of God speak and develop a deeper and more intimate relationship with God through his word; as we see increasing evidence of change in our hearts, we will no longer think, "I should read my Bible" but rather, "I get to read my Bible." Reading, believing, and practicing God's word will make a positive and significant difference in our lives.

Questions for thought:

- How has the Bible made a difference in your life?
- Has the Bible made you uncomfortable in a specific area of your life? If so, how did you rectify the tension?
- You may have heard the commonly used phrase, "Don't just read your Bible, let the Bible read you." What does this mean and how have you applied it to your life?

Day Four - How do I read my Bible?

Learning to read and study the Bible for ourselves is one of the most important things we can do as Jesus' followers.

An easy-to-remember and straightforward way to study the Bible is known as the SOAP method.

- "S" stands for Scripture. Choose a passage of Scripture and write down a verse or two that stands out to you.
- "O" stands for Observation. What did you observe in the passage? The more specific, the better. Who is mentioned? What are they doing? What is happening? What do you learn in the passage?
- "A" stands for Application. How can you apply this passage to your everyday life? How can you live out what you have learned?
- "P" stands for Prayer – Write a personal prayer based on your observation and application.

Thanks to the internet, we have access to more Bible study tools than all previous generations. We can go as deep as we want in our personal study by using the SOAP method and online Bible study tools such as:

BlueLetterBible.org

BibleHub.com

BibleGateway.com

Researching and diving deep into God's word is possible and accessible for anyone who wants to study. However, it's important to remember that studying and learning about God's word isn't a substitute for prayer or putting into practice what we learn.

Reading and studying God's word should not be merely to gain information. The primary purpose and end-goal of all Bible study are to know God, to love God, and become more and more like Jesus. All of us should take the words of James to heart:

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do” (James 1:22-25).

Yesterday, we talked about how the Bible should make a difference in every area of our lives. We can guard against forgetting what we have read by memorizing Scripture.

David says in Psalm 119:11, “I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you” (Christian Standard Bible).

Treasuring God's word in our hearts is about so much more than mere memorization. It's about planting God's truth in our hearts and allowing it to make us more and more like Jesus. Scripture memorization

isn't just a discipline or a contest to see how many verses we can say from memory. Instead, it's about having a chest full of treasures for every situation in life. It's about knowing the difference between the lies of the enemy and the truth of God. It's about knowing the truth that sets us free. It's about savoring the word that brings us joy. It's about being able to access and apply God's word anytime, anywhere.

Jesus gave us a great example of the power of memorized Scripture. After fasting in the wilderness for forty days and nights, he was hungry. The enemy tempted him by saying, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Whether Jesus had the power to turn the stones to bread was not the issue. Colossians 1 tells us that the universe was made through Jesus, therefore, turning a few rocks into a warm, delicious loaf of bread would have been easy-peasy for the Son of God. But instead, Jesus replied to the devil with Scripture he had hidden in his heart. Jesus answered, "It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:1-4). Jesus clearly had read, studied, and hidden the word in his heart. He had not merely listened to it, he put it into practice. (Consider reading the full account of Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4:1-11.)

Bible study is essential and living what we learn is vital.

Consider these tips to help you memorize Scripture:

Choose a verse that applies to a current life situation. For example, if your heart is broken, Psalm 34:18 will remind you that "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Write the verse and place it where you will see it several times a day, perhaps the bathroom mirror or refrigerator.

Practice saying it aloud.

Turn it into a prayer. "Lord, my heart is broken, but your word assures me that you are close to the brokenhearted, so I know you are close to me."

Questions for thought:

- What are the most significant obstacles preventing you from studying your Bible?
- What is your initial reaction when you think about studying God's word for yourself?
- What are the most significant benefits of reading and studying the Bible yourself?
- What passage of Scripture do you want to memorize?

Day Five - Falling in love with God's word

When phrases like "fall in love with God's word" are used, it can evoke strange responses. How are we supposed to fall in love with a book?

This week we talked about how the Bible isn't just another book. It is inspired by God (God-breathed), it is unchanging, holy, and the number one-way God reveals himself to us.

How do we fall in love with God's word?

Perhaps thinking about the Bible in terms of more than just a book will be helpful. Remember, Jesus is the Word made flesh (John 1:14). If we want to love Jesus more, then the way to do that is to know him through his word. It's helpful to think about falling in love with the Bible in terms of a growing relationship.

Allow me to give a personal example to illustrate.

I liked my husband when I first met him, but I didn't know everything about him. The more time I spent with him, the more I liked him. The more I liked him, the more I wanted to be with him. The more time I was with him, the more I loved him. The more I loved him, the more I wanted to be with him and know more about him. This pursuit never reaches an end! There is no end to what I can learn about him and how much my love for him will grow.

Our relationship with the Bible is the same. We meet with God on the pages of our Bible. The more time we spend with him, the more we know him. The more we know him, the more we love him. The more we love him, the more we want to spend time with him. Reading and learning to love our Bibles is a pursuit of God himself. Soon we discover the Bible is a chest full of treasures that has no end. The prophet Jeremiah described it this way, "When your words came, I ate them. They were my joy and my heart's delight" (Jeremiah 15:16).

When we spend time reading our Bible, we develop ears to hear God speak. Soon we discover the Bible isn't merely a book to find a verse here or there to apply to a difficult situation; instead, we discover that God gave us His word so we will know the God who walks with us every day. The Bible will become a source of delight that has no end, "How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103).

We must strive not to read the Bible like we would a news article – simply to gain information or to increase our knowledge. Learning to love our Bible means reading it as God intended it to be read – as a love letter. A letter that reveals God's heart for creation, his plan for our redemption, and his guidance for our lives.

Falling in love with God's word means falling in love with God. Falling in love with God changes everything – our hearts, our relationships, our motives, and our desires. What steps will you take to cultivate a growing love for God's word?

Questions for thought:

- How would reading your Bible like a love letter instead of a news article change your approach to the Bible?
- Think of the most important relationships in your life. How do you deliberately cultivate and grow them? What are you willing or not willing to do to grow those relationships? How can you apply those same principles to your relationship with God's word?