

4. The Role of the Bible (2Q 2026 Growing in a Relationship with God)

Biblical material: Lam. 3:22, 23; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; John 17:17; Eph. 1:13; Ps. 119:11; 1 Cor. 2:14; Heb. 4:12.

Quotes

- The primary purpose of reading the Bible is not to know the Bible but to know God. *James Merritt*
- I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible than I could well tell how to stand under, and yet at another time the whole Bible hath been to me as dry as a stick. *John Bunyan*
- The questions we ask of the Bible impact the wisdom we glean from it. *Tara-Leigh Cobble*
- When asked, ‘What is more important: prayer or reading the Bible?’ I ask, ‘What is more important: breathing in or breathing out?’” *Charles Spurgeon*
- The branches of growing trees not only reach higher, but their roots grow deeper. It’s impossible for a strong tree to have high branches without having deep roots. It would become top-heavy and topple over in the wind. The same is true with Christians. It’s impossible for us to grow in the Lord without entwining our roots around His Word and deepening our life in His commands. *Joni Eraeckson Tada*
- The Bible is my church. It is always open, and there is my High Priest ever waiting to receive me. There I have my confessional, my thanksgiving, my psalm of praise, a field of promises, and a congregation of whom the world is not worthy—prophets and apostles, and martyrs and confessors—in short, all I can want, there I find. *Charlotte Elliot*

Questions

How can we make Scripture relevant to people today? What is essential in understanding the Bible? What is the Bible’s role in developing our relationship with God? How does it affect how we deal with others? How do help others see truth in God’s word when they have a very different interpretation? How does the Devil use Scripture?

Bible summary

Lamentations 3:22, 23 tells us that God’s trustworthy love never fails. “All Scripture inspired by God is useful for teaching, for confronting what is wrong, for setting us straight, and for telling us what is right.” (2 Timothy 3:16). In John 17:17 Jesus says that God’s word is truth. The word of truth is the good news of our salvation (see Ephesians 1:13). Remembering what God says helps us not to sin (see Psalm 119:11). According to 1 Corinthians 2:14 people who are not spiritual can’t understand Scripture. God’s word is alive and effective, sharper than a sword (see Hebrews 4:12).

Comment

In terms of developing a relationship with God, the Bible is essential. More than a guide book, the Bible is a record of God’s interactions over time with us, culminating in his coming to be with us as Jesus.

However, when it comes to reading the Bible, we all bring many presuppositions to the book. It is virtually impossible to examine it on its own merits, because it has come to mean so many different things to different people. But only as we allow the Bible to speak for itself will it be meaningful for us.

The Bible has been called the world’s least-read best-seller. It is viewed as a good book, but few examine why and how. It may be viewed as literature, and read that way. Some want to turn it into a code book. Others dismiss it altogether as the ramblings of ancient men.

So how are we, who already accept the Bible, able to share the good news with those for whom the Bible is not a trusted authority? How is it possible to convey the idea that this is the word of

God without becoming pretentiously pious or sounding weird? How can we use the Bible with those who do not accept it as valid at all?

Some practice what we might call “bibliomancy.” This is flipping through the Bible and randomly pointing at a text to determine one’s fate, rather like astrology. Others take the words, and apply them literally and directly to their situation, without regard to their original intent. That’s rather like reading someone else’s mail and believing it’s all about you! Still others claim to read the Bible as today’s newspaper, applying every aspect to current events.

The Bible is not just a good book, or sublime literature, or human imaginings. Take it or leave it—the Bible says of itself: this is God speaking to you. Question is, can we trust this God? For to answer the question “Can we trust the Bible?” really means answering a deeper question: “Can we trust the God the Bible describes?” So what of the God of the Bible? Doesn’t really matter whether the Bible can be trusted if we can’t trust the God it speaks of.

From Eden to Exodus, from Mount Sinai to the Mount of Olives, from Galilee to Gethsemane—the chorus of the Bible is: God can be trusted! He really does do what he promises. He really can fulfill his claims. He really is as he says.

The Bible is not full of pious sayings and religious instructions. Instead it shows how God acts and reacts to human beings. The Bible tells the story of how God so loved the world that he was willing to do absolutely everything—even to die on the Cross—to win us back. God doesn’t say “Believe blindly in me.” He says “Take a look. See the kind of person I am. Examine my record. Understand my nature. Then accept me for what I am. Look at what I can do for you. Salvation unlimited!” That’s what the Bible describes. In clear and simple terms it tells us how God is involved with us. The evidence is overwhelming.

So why do so many ignore the Bible, then? Why do so few people trust the Bible? People don’t reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts themselves! Sadly most don’t want to know what the Bible says because they don’t want to know God. As Josh Billings suggested: “Almost any fool can prove the Bible ain’t so—it takes a wise man to believe it.” So let’s leave aside all the pointless quibbling over this “inaccuracy” or that “mistake” in the Bible.

How do you decide, then? How do you decide personally whether you can trust the Bible and its God? Only one way—read it, and find out! Only by doing such an experiment will you find out the truth for yourself. “The Bible must be its own argument and defence.” (H.J. Van Dyke).

Only then will you really know, instead of relying on other people’s ideas and opinions. As Charles Hodge said: “The best evidence of the Bible’s being the word of God is found between its covers.” For personal experience is the only way the Bible can be analyzed and judged trustworthy.

Ellen White Comments

Says the Saviour, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life.” You will have a conflict to be right. I don’t command you to read the Bible--I never shall. I want you to read the Bible because you love it, not because you are driven to it, for then it will be an unpleasant task. But if you neglect the reading of the Bible, you will lose your love for it. Those who love the word of God are those who read it most. By reading and searching out scripture references, you will see the chain of truth, and will see new beauties in the word of God. While you make the Scriptures more your study, and become more familiar with them, you will be better fortified against the temptations of Satan. When inclined to speak, or act, wrong, some scripture will come to arrest you, and turn you right. It is not natural for the heart to love the Bible; but when it is renewed by grace, then the mind will feast upon the rich truths and promises contained in the word of God. {AY 79-80}

If you search the Scriptures to vindicate your own opinions, you will never reach the truth. Search in order to learn what the Lord says. If conviction comes as you search, if you see that your cherished opinions are not in harmony with the truth, do not misinterpret the truth in order to suit your own belief, but accept the light given. Open mind and heart that you may behold wondrous things out of God’s word. {COL 112} Prepared March 5, 2025 © Jonathan Gallagher 2025

