

13. Living by the Word of God (2Q 2020—How to Interpret Scripture)

Biblical Material: Phil. 2:12–16; Luke 4:4, 8, 10–12; Ps. 37:7; Ps. 46:10; Ps. 62:1, 2, 5; Col. 3:16; James 1:22.

Quotes

- When you read God’s Word, you must constantly be saying to yourself, “It is talking to me, and about me.” *Soren Kierkegaard*
- You may as well quit reading and hearing the Word of God, and give it to the devil, if you do not desire to live according to it. *Martin Luther*
- While other books inform, and some few reform, this one book transforms. *A.T. Pierson*
- When you have read the Bible, you will know it is the word of God, because you will have found it the key to your own heart, your own happiness and your own duty. *Woodrow Wilson*
- We do not read the Bible the way it is; we read it the way we are. *Evelyn Uyemura*
- The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives. *D.L. Moody*

Questions

Having read the Bible, how do we put it into practice? How can we make it a greater part of our lives—more than simple rote reading? How does the example of Jesus help us? What do we do if we have questions about some parts of Scripture? How do we truly live by the Word of God—what does this really look like? How does this all fit into our experience of God?

Bible summary

“Be God’s blameless children living in the middle of a dishonest and corrupt people. Shine among them as lights to the world, holding out to them the word of life.” Phil. 2:15, 16 FBV. Jesus answered all of Satan’s temptations with Scripture (Luke 4:4, 8, 10–12). We’re told not to worry but to wait patiently on the Lord (Ps. 37:7). He tells us, “Be still, and know that I am God!” (Ps. 46:10). God is our rock, salvation, and hope (Ps. 62:1, 2, 5). “Let Christ’s message fully live in you.” Col. 3:16 FBV. “Do what the word says—don’t just listen to it.” James 1:22 FBV.

Comment

The Bible is all about God revealing himself to us. It’s through the Bible that we come to know him. God reaches out and tells us the truth about himself, and demonstrates it by coming to us and showing us in the person of Jesus. For that reason, whether we recognize it or not, Jesus is the primary focus of both Old and New Testaments. God took human form so we could see his true nature. Jesus says that anyone who has seen him has seen the Father. This is our window into God’s character and into his plan to save us.

So how do we live by the word of God? What does this even mean? Sure it means immersing ourselves in the Bible. But a simple reading of the book is not enough. We must engage with it. It has to become real and meaningful to us personally. When Jesus spoke of eating his body and drinking his blood, his disciples were horrified. But he meant we have to internalize the truths he came to demonstrate. In the same way the Bible must become the prime determinant of the way we live. We should be very obviously followers of Jesus!

As Abraham Lincoln affirmed, “I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this book.” Robert E. Lee stated, “In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength.” John Ruskin wrote, “Whatever merit there is in anything that I have written is simply due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read me a part of the Bible and daily made me learn a part of it by heart.”

How different our lives would be if we believed like that, and practiced such good examples! That is what the Bible is for—to reveal God to us in all the very human situations that have existed, to place his glorious plan of salvation in the context of its great need in a world of sin. This is our Biblical message:

“This is the message we received from him and that we declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him at all.” 1 John 1:5 FBV.

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“The Bible is not merely a book, but The Book. It alone is the universal Book, the eternal Book, the Book for all time. It is the voice of the Lord. It stands alone, unapproachable in its grandeur, as high above all other books as heaven is above earth, or as the Son of God is above the sons of men... The Bible, though regarded as a Book, is in fact a library of sixty-six volumes, written by between thirty and forty different authors, in three languages, on totally different topics and in extraordinarily different circumstances. One wrote history, another biography, one wrote on theology, another poetry, another prophecy, others on philosophy, jurisprudence, genealogy, ethnology, and narratives of wonderful journeys. Here in the Bible we have them all, in a little Book that a child can carry in its little hand. The strangest thing of all is that, although their subjects are so diverse and difficult, and although it was impossible for the man who wrote the first pages to have the slightest knowledge of what others would write 1500 years later, yet this collection of writings is not only unified by men in one Book, but so unified by God, the Author, that we can never think of it today as anything else but one Book! And one Book it is indeed—the miracle of all literary unity.” Dyson Hague, *The Wonder of the Book*

Ellen White comments

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 79.2}

Here is the Word, my brethren [holding up the Bible]. Open this Word to your children; present it in your schools; present it, I beseech you, wherever you are; and live by the Word of God. Here is life; here is salvation. Take your light from under the bushel, and give life and light to the world. God help us that we may arouse from our state of stupor. {GCB, May 17, 1909 par. 26} (Her last address to General Conference Session).