

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD



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A Get Activated! Book

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ISBN # 3-905332-33-7

By Jason Rae and Shannon Shayler, for the *Get Activated!* series.

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Second printing, 2000

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Why the Bible?

Why should you bother to read a book that's thousands of years old when bookstores, magazine racks, and the Internet are overflowing with the latest reading material on every topic imaginable? The reasons for reading the Bible are almost endless, but here's a suggested Top Ten:

1. *It's the all-time international bestseller.* No other book has been read by more people, sold more copies, or been translated into more languages. The Bible still sells around 50 million copies every year—more than any other book in the world.¹

2. *It's the real thing.* There is more manuscript evidence to authenticate the Bible than there is for any ten other pieces of ancient classical literature combined.

¹ *The Almanac of the Christian World*, Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990.

3. *It is unique in its continuity.* The 66 books of the Bible were written over a span of 1,500 years by more than 40 authors from every walk of life, including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, shepherds, soldiers, poets, statesmen, and scholars, and they cover a wide array of subjects. Nevertheless, from beginning to end, these authors spoke with harmony and continuity, outlining one unfolding story: God's love for man.

4. *Science supports its record of history.* Noted archaeologist Dr. Nelson Glueck states: "The Bible's incredibly correct historical memory has been validated many times by archaeological discoveries. No discovery has ever controverted a Bible reference."

5. *It has survived.* The Bible has withstood attacks by its enemies as no other book has. From the Roman persecutions to the present, every attempt to obliterate the Bible and outlaw the practice of its teachings has only hastened its spread. The entire Bible is now available in 366 languages, and portions of it are available in 1,846 others.¹

6. *There's something for everyone.* The Bible is the most fascinating book in the world, in which you can find drama, romance, poetry, prophecy, history, mystery, intrigue, ethics, wisdom—almost anything! If you love beautiful poetry, read the Book of Psalms. If you like fiery oratory, read the Prophets. If you like philosophical arguments, you ought to enjoy the Book of Job. The Song of Solomon is passionate and romantic. Science fic-

¹ 1998 *Scripture Language Report*, United Bible Societies.

tion?—The best of it pales in comparison to God's own description of the future as foretold by the Lord in the Book of Revelation. If you want to read about miraculous happenings, read the Kings. Businessmen and administrators can benefit from the Book of Proverbs. If you want tips on people handling and a moral compass for life, study the Gospels. The Bible is even more thrilling and more wonderful than any literary concoction of man because it's *true!*

7. *It reveals the future.* The Bible is not just a history book, it's a *news* book. It not only tells you about yesterday, it tells you about today and tomorrow. It contains hundreds of fulfilled prophecies that accurately predicted the future of nations, peoples, cities, and the coming of the Messiah—as well as many others that are yet to come to pass that reveal what God has in store for *you*, from now to eternity.

8. *It has the answers to life's biggest questions.* In its pages you will find answers to where you came from, why you're here, how to love, how to be happy, how to live forever, and much more!

9. *It's alive!* Although it was written thousands of years ago, the Bible has the unique ability to speak straight to your heart, day by day, problem by problem, year after year.

10. *Through its words you can get to know its Author.* Best of all, the Bible will bring you into an exciting, loving, personal relationship with its

Author—the God of love, the Creator of the universe. “No one has seen God at any time,”¹ but we can *know* Him through His Words.

Experience the thrills that come from a vibrant, personal relationship with a God who loved you so much that He sent His own Son to this world to die for you, and with a Savior who loves you so much that He gladly paid the ultimate price so that you could live forever with Him in Heaven!

If you haven't yet received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you can do so right now. That will be the beginning of a truly amazing and loving personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus, which will deepen and mature as you read His Word and communicate with Him through prayer. It all starts with a simple heartfelt prayer like the following:

Dear Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God and that You died for me. I need Your love to cleanse me from my mistakes and wrongdoing. I now open the door of my heart and I ask You, Jesus, to please come into my life and give me Your free gift of eternal life. Amen.

¹ John 1:18.

Fulfilled Bible prophecy proves that the Bible is the inspired Word of God!

Jesus said, “I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.”¹

“Search from the book of the Lord, and read: not one of these shall fail; not one shall lack her mate. For My mouth has commanded it.”²

The mate of every prophecy is its fulfillment. Hundreds of prophecies given in the Bible—sometimes hundreds and even thousands of years in advance—have been fulfilled down to the most intricate detail, and the ones that are yet to come will be fulfilled just as surely.³ What God has determined and prophesied, He’s going to do. The Lord will make sure that every single prophecy is fulfilled!

God wants us to know what’s going to happen because He loves us, His children, and He doesn’t want us to be fearful or frightened by the events to come. He wants us to be prepared for them, to be calm and full of faith, and to be reassured by His Word. We are not to be in ignorance or grope in darkness, but rather we are the children of light and these things will not come upon us as a thief in the night, unexpected or by surprise.⁴ We will have prepared our hearts and minds, and will recognize these events as they occur and know what to expect, and we’ll be prepared accordingly, as best we can. Knowing Jesus and His Word will carry us through!

It’s also thrilling to study *fulfilled* prophecies because it encourages your faith to know that other prophecies regarding the future will also be fulfilled just as accurately and just as surely.

—David Brandt Berg (D.B.B., 1919–1994)

¹ John 14:29

² Isaiah 34:16

³ For an outline of some of the most outstanding fulfilled prophecies in the Bible, see “Fulfilled Bible Prophecies” on page 80.

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:2–8.

What's in It for You?

How will reading God's Word make your life better? You'll be surprised!

Food for spiritual strength and growth. Just as your body needs food to survive and grow strong, your spirit needs spiritual nourishment from God's Word. This little analogy pops up repeatedly in both the Old and New Testaments:

When Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God,'" He was quoting Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy.¹

Job declared in his time of suffering, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."²

In Psalm 119—which, incidentally, is the longest chapter in the Bible and all about the importance of the Word—King David said to the Lord,

¹ Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3.

² Job 23:12.

“How sweet are Your Words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”¹

The prophet Jeremiah said, “Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.”²

The apostle Peter, writing to new Christians, admonished them to “as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.”³

A deeper relationship with Jesus and God.

When you received Jesus into your heart, you began a wonderful and fulfilling personal relationship with Him. He wants to be your Best Friend, Counselor, Teacher, Guide, and much more! The way to get to know Him better is through His Word. The Gospels, especially, reveal His nature, His personality, His power, and His love.

God wants His relationship with you to be a two-way, give-and-take affair. It is through reading the Word that you will find out not only what God has for you, but also what He would like from you.

Think of His Words as personal love letters from the One who knows and cares about you more than any other can. Someone once said, “In God’s creation we see His hand, but in His Word we see His heart.”

Truth and freedom. It seems that everywhere you look today, someone is marketing “the truth” in the form of some new book, program, or product. Who are you supposed to believe—and how much will it cost you?

¹ Psalm 119:103.

² Jeremiah 15:16.

³ 1 Peter 2:2.

Well, Jesus has the real article. “If you abide in My Word,” He promises, “you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”¹

You can rest assured that everything you read in the Bible is the truth. It's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Become familiar with its precepts, and you will have a standard by which you can measure all things. God's Spirit through His Word will help you discern what is true and what is false.

Faith. Faith isn't something you can *try* to have. It comes by hearing—or reading—the Word of God.² You have faith because you're full of the Word of God. If you're *weak* in faith, it's because you're weak in the Word. But the more you read and study the Word with an open mind and receptive heart, the more your faith will grow; it's an automatic process. It's that simple and that sure!

Happiness. True happiness comes from following Jesus' loving example, and you know how to do that from His Word. Jesus said, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”³

Contentment and peace of mind. By studying God's Word, you will come to understand His loving ways. This will give you faith that whatever your

¹ John 8:31–32.

² Romans 10:17. ³ John 15:10–11.

circumstances may be, He is in control and He has your best interests at heart. “Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you.”¹ What greater peace of mind could you ask for than that which comes from knowing that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”?² When disappointments, obstacles, and setbacks wear on you, taking a little time to read from God’s Word will put things back in proper perspective.

Answers to your problems and questions. When you’ve got questions, the Lord has answers, and when you have problems, He has solutions.—And they’re all in His Word! By reading God’s recorded Word or hearing Him speak to your heart personally—His spoken Word—you can find the answer to every question and every problem that you’ll ever have. When you are faced with a problem or difficult decision, look for the answer in a similar situation in the Word. Once you become familiar with the spiritual principles, divine wisdom, and practical counsel that are in the written Word, you will find that the Lord will show you how to apply it to questions and problems that come up in your own life. His Word will be like a light, illuminating the path ahead of you.³

Finding God’s will. God has a plan for your life. He knows what’s best for you and He always chooses what’s best for you, so if you can just learn to let

¹ Job 22:21.

² Romans 8:28.

³ Psalm 119:105.

Him direct your decisions, everything will work out great in the end. It sounds simple enough, but how do you find out what is God's best for you in a particular situation? How do you find "God's will"?

The Word is the known, sure, absolute, revealed will of God. So when you're faced with a decision, look at all He's said before. Pattern your decision on a similar situation in the Word, or on the foundation principles of God's Word. When He shows you what to do right from His own Book and you follow it, you can't go wrong. You can also ask God to speak to your own heart directly and show you what His will is for you in that particular situation.¹

God's Word also has the power to change the way you see life's problems. It will cause you to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove [know] what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."²

Models for godly living. The Bible is full of stories about otherwise ordinary men and women whose faith and love for God saw them through thick and thin, and made them great in His eyes. Much can be learned and much strength can be drawn from their examples. There are also many faith-building accounts of God's love and care for His children, His protection, and His supply of their every need, as well as examples of what *not* to do and the consequences of violating His spiritual principles. "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our

¹ For more on how you can hear directly from God yourself, read *Hearing from Heaven* in the *Get Activated!* series.

² Romans 12:2.

³ 1 Corinthians 10:11.

admonition,”³ and “whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”¹

God's promises and power at your disposal.

The Bible is full of promises that God has made to man—promises that He wants us to apply practically. Some of His promises are universal, like: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”² Others were originally made to certain individuals or groups, like “If you ask anything in My name, I will do it”³—a promise that Jesus first made to His twelve disciples.

But God's promises were not given solely for the sake of the original hearers. They are for anyone who has faith enough to believe that God will be true to His word—including you! God means exactly what He has promised, and He will fulfill His promises to the very letter if you will reach out with the hand of faith and claim them in a definite manner.

As you become more familiar with God's Word, you will learn to recognize His promises and claim them as your own. When you do that, it shows you have faith. It's a positive declaration of your faith and knowledge of the Word which pleases God and sets His power in motion to answer your prayers.

(For more examples of God's promises to you, please see the “Precious Promises' Sampler” on page 72.)

¹ Romans 15:4.

² Joel 2:32 and Romans 10:13.

³ John 14:14.

⁴ Matthew 22:39.

More love. It is difficult to follow Christ's injunction to "love your neighbor as yourself"⁴ when your neighbors—or those you interact with on a regular basis—are sometimes the most difficult people to get along with, much less love. Where do you find the "Christian grace" to overlook the overbearing boss, the jealous co-worker, the noisy parties next door, or worse—and to *love* as Jesus loved? Only in God's Word! "Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble"—or "nothing shall offend them," as it is translated in the King James Version.¹ As you read and study God's Word, you'll acquire more and more of His Spirit and love, and that will help you be more understanding, compassionate, and tolerant toward others.

¹ Psalm 119:165.

Many people struggle through life needlessly, when only a little more time spent with God's Word would bring the peace, faith, and happiness they seek.



Do you feed your body but starve your soul?

You could feed your body and lose your soul, like the man in the Bible who stuffed his barns full of grain, only to have God say to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"¹

Having a full stomach and a full purse and a full head cannot give you a full heart. If you put the desires of the flesh above the needs of your spirit, then you will find that nothing ever satisfies. You will become as the world-famed poet, Lord Byron, when he despaired at the height of his fame, "I have drunk of every fount of pleasure and quaffed every cup of fame, yet, alas, I die of thirst!"

Just like you have to eat in order to have physical strength, you have to feed from the Word to have spiritual strength. You've got to feed your soul or you will never fully develop or mature spiritually. And if you really want to grow in spirit you will feed from the Word every day!

"Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day"² with the life-giving nourishment of His Words. Is yours?

—D.B.B.



If your faith is founded on solid fact, God's Word, it doesn't really matter *how* you feel. God's Word is still just as effective and unchanging regardless of your feelings. It is your faith in the Word that counts, and that's what will pull you through in times of severe trials or tests—like

¹ Luke 12:16–21, NIV. ² 2 Corinthians 4:16.

the message of the old Sunday school song about three men on a wall:

Three men were walking on a wall:
Feeling, Faith and Fact.
Feeling took an awful fall.
Faith was taken aback.
Only Fact remained,
So Fact pulled up Faith,
And Faith pulled up Feeling,
And they walked on the wall again.



The Word of God is the foundation of faith!

How do you get faith? It is a gift of God and it's available to you or anyone else who wants it. The problem is, people don't usually want it until they need it, and then they suddenly find they don't have the faith they need because they have no background of faith or trusting God's Word—no foundation. After all, how can they have faith in something they know little or nothing about?

Just as no good building is without a good foundation, there is no faith without the Word, because faith in God is built on His Word. So if you feel like you're weak in faith, there's a simple cure: God's Word will increase your faith.

Faith comes, it grows, by hearing the Word of God. As you faithfully read and study the Word, as you meditate on it and even memorize it, every word will inspire, strengthen, and increase your faith. Fill your mind and heart with positive, encouraging, strengthening, faith-building thoughts from His Word, and you'll soon be amazed at the faith you'll have—true faith, the kind that can stand any test, the kind that works miracles, and the kind that lasts, built on the solid-rock foundation of His truth!

—D.B.B.



Charles never stopped worrying. He worried every time he thought about the rent. He worried for his children's safety every time he sent them off to school. Concerns about his business kept his stomach in knots. If he thought of something he wasn't worried about, then he worried why not!

One day he confided in his friend Bruce, "I just can't stop worrying. It consumes me day and night. I don't sleep well for fear of what the morning may bring, then all day long I fret about this and that. I wish there was some cure for worrying!"

Bruce thought for a moment, then took Charles to look at a large painting that hung in Bruce's office. The painting depicted a raging storm, with dark and turbulent skies. Everything about the picture was gloomy, violent, and destructive—except for one thing. In the foreground was a white lily that seemed to be totally unaffected by the storm. There it stood, in total peace, with not a single petal out of place. The reason was not immediately apparent, but upon closer examination Charles saw that there was a glass jar over the lily, which protected it from the stormy gusts and torrential rain.

"This," said Bruce, "is the protection of faith which comes from God's Word. The storms of life may beat about us ferociously, the rain may come down like a flood, but because of one thing we are safe—faith in the Word of God. If this lily had eyes to see the storm and ears to hear the wind and the rain, it could still rest in peace, knowing that God is in control. The lily, though small and frail on its own, is at peace because the glass shields it from harm."

Then Bruce picked up a Bible from his desk and handed it to Charles. "*This* is the source of peace. Read it for a few minutes each day, and you will soon find a protective bubble of faith to retreat to when the winds of adversity blow and the storms of life come. Faith will remind you that you are in the hands of God, who cares for and lovingly protects His children."



Why waste time on complicated, confused theories and thoughts of man, when the Bible is right there, so simple, direct and to the point?

—D.B.B.



A young man once visited an elderly friend. While she was in the kitchen fixing him some tea, he picked up her well-worn Bible and was rather absent-mindedly flipping through its pages when he noticed here and there in the margin two letters—T.P. When his friend came with the tea he said, “I was enjoying looking at your Bible, but what do these letters that you have written in so many places mean? T.P.—and here it is again, T.P.— and here.”

“Oh,” she said, “that means *‘tried and proven.’* In some time of need I have claimed each of those promises as my very own. They are the ones that I have tried and proven true.”

—Virginia Brandt Berg (V.B.B.), adapted



God’s Word and His guarantees have no restrictions, no limitations, no qualifications except our faith.



God’s promises are like life preservers: They keep the soul from sinking in the sea of trouble.



God never promises more than He is able to perform.



God’s promises are like the stars—the darker the night the brighter they shine.



The promises of God are the currency of Heaven: If you've got a lot of verses in your heart, you're really rich! You can cash them in at the bank of Heaven and get back answers!



You should no more try to find your own way through life than you should try to take a trip without a map.

While traveling along a road, you can only see what's around you moment by moment. But if you'll look at the map and have faith in it, you can also see where the road came from, regardless of where you started out yourself. And even if you've never been to your final destination or traveled that road before, you can know where the road ends. But if you don't take time to study the map, you could waste an awful lot of time or maybe even ruin your chances of getting to your destination at all!

Just as you must look at the map, believe it's true and follow it to get where you're going, if you will read God's Word, believe that it is for you and follow it, you'll come out at Heaven. Absolutely! Without fail!

Just follow the Map Book and you'll know where you're going. God can see it all! He not only knows where you are right now and where you came from, your past, but He knows where you're going, too!

—D.B.B.



Secret of success...

"His delight is in the [Word] of the Lord, and in His [Word] 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."

—Psalm 1:2–3 (See also Joshua 1:8.)

Treasures New and Old

From the very beginning, God has given His people the basic information they've needed to live happy, productive lives. He gave more and more as time went on, until by and by, several hundred years before Jesus came, He began to tell His prophets more specific details about His unfolding plan for man. Then when Jesus came, He told His apostles and the Early Church much, much more. Throughout history, God has been giving His children more information and more details as they were needed, and much of this information has been recorded in the Bible that we have today.

The Bible tells us the basics of what we need to know for our salvation and a whole lot more, but it doesn't tell us *everything*. Some people, however, insist that the Bible's enough, that it is *all* mankind needs, and that the last time God ever spoke was to the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos

2,000 years ago, when John received the Book of Revelation, the final book of the Bible. Those people argue that we're not *supposed* to get any further information or instruction from God. Well, a God who couldn't talk any more would be a pretty *dead* God!

But He's a living God, a talking God, and He *still* speaks to His children just as He has down through the ages. He gives us His Words for today because He wants to show us He's alive and well and working on our behalf. He wants to help us through our problems. He wants to show His great personal love for each of us. He wants to help us lead others to Him. And He wants to prepare us and the world for His soon-coming return.

The Bible works as well today as it ever has, and it's the foundation of our faith. But a lot of things have changed since the Bible days. That's another reason why we also need His *updates*—messages received through prophecy or other forms of direct revelation in which He gives further information, instruction, and encouragement to His children today.

The Bible does not contain the *only* Words of God. He has spoken to countless of His children throughout the ages, some of which they or others recorded and preserved in writings that are just as inspired of Him as is the Bible—and He's still pouring forth fresh new words. He gives us "treasures new and old!"¹

But how do you know which writings of other Christians are truly inspired by God, and which are

¹ Matthew 13:52.

merely their own thoughts or misinterpretations? You measure those writings against the Bible. Scripture is the final authority by which you can measure anything that's said. Look for a Scriptural precedent. Check it out with the Bureau of Standards, the Bible. Divinely inspired writing will be in conformity with the Word of God in the Bible. You won't find anything that is contrary to the basic principles of the Bible. New writings may contain details not found in the Bible—details which help fill in the gaps and complete the picture—but there will be nothing *contrary* to what is in the Bible.

Another way to judge the level of inspiration of other Christian writings is by the effect they have had or are having on the world, and by the effect they have on *you*.¹ Do they further the Gospel and win people to Jesus? Do they help you experience God's love? Do they strengthen your faith? Do they bring forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, faith, gentleness, meekness, temperance²—in people's lives, including your own?

If you pray and look to Him, He will show you what is worthwhile reading. He will help you discern what is true and what is false doctrine or the thoughts of man that aren't in line with His.

¹ Matthew 7:15–20 regarding fruits.

² Galatians 5:22–23, KJV.

The Word of God is like a beautiful string of pearls!

God's Word is an absolutely inexhaustible source of wisdom and knowledge in which you can constantly find treasures new and old. It will stand a thousand readings, and he who has gone over it most frequently is the surest of finding new wonders there. Each time we delve into the Word, we bring forth priceless truths by the handful!

But these pearls of knowledge are nothing without the Holy Spirit. No matter how much you study, it takes the Spirit of God and the hand of God to string the pearls of His Word together in proper order, sorted out and made into something useful—a wonderful, beautiful string of truths in proper order, sequence, size, importance and beauty to adorn your mind and heart. That's the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is knowing how to use what you already know—in this case, knowing how to use your knowledge of God's Word to make it useful.

So don't neglect the beauties, the riches, and the treasures of the Word of God. Ask God for wisdom. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding."¹ It is better than gold!²

—D.B.B.



The Word of God is the most powerful truth on Earth!

The pen is mightier than the sword! Men of God have seldom ruled empires but they won worlds of men with their words, faith, and ideas which captured hearts, minds, and spirits, and set them forever free! God's eternal kingdom of His Words of life and love have conquered worlds of men's eternal spirits that are far greater, longer-lasting, and happier than man's mere worldly empires of the sword.

¹ Proverbs 4:7. ² Proverbs 16:16.

The words of God's prophets have crossed the ages and swept around the Earth and changed the course of nations. The words of their ideals have changed the hearts of men and given them hope for a better world! It's the Bible that's built great Christian empires, and given the love of God through Jesus to a world dying for His love! His Words are spirit and life.¹ Without them, everything would be totally dead.²

This is the most powerful weapon in the world, the Word of God. It can do more than split atoms! It can change hearts, and no atom bomb has done that yet. It can change minds, and no number of bullets has ever done that. The Words of God are truly revolutionary, for they can change the hearts of men!

—D.B.B.



The Word of God in human form

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ... That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.”

—*John 1:1–5,9–14, KJV*

¹ John 6:63.

² Psalm 33:6; Hebrews 11:3.

To Get the Most from What You Read...

T*he Holy Ghost connection.* You'll *never* be able to understand the deeper truths of the Word with your carnal mind. "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."¹ But God can reveal those things to you through His Holy Spirit if you ask Him to.² In fact, this is one of the main purposes for the Holy Spirit—to guide us in His Word. Jesus explained to His disciples shortly before His crucifixion: "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you,"³ and, "He will guide you into all truth."⁴

¹ 1 Corinthians 2:14.

² 1 Corinthians 2:9–14.

³ John 14:26.

⁴ John 16:13.

If you have been filled with the Holy Spirit, those promises are for you too! And if you haven't yet been filled with the Spirit, you *can* be!

Everyone who receives Jesus receives a measure of the Holy Spirit, but being filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit—what the Bible calls the “baptism” of the Holy Spirit—is usually a separate experience that happens later. If you would like to be filled with the Holy Spirit, simply pray and ask the Lord for it. “If you ... know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”¹

You'll be amazed at the difference that will make! Some Bible passages that seemed to go over your head before will suddenly make sense; at other times, passages that you *thought* you understood will burst with new meaning.

(For more information about the Holy Spirit and all it can do for you and through you, see *God's Gifts*, another title in the *Get Activated!* series.)

Open your spiritual eyes. When Jesus' disciples asked Him why He taught in parables that most people didn't seem to understand, He answered: “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it has not been given. ... Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ... But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.”² You need to pray, as King David did, for the Lord to open your spiritual eyes to give

¹ Luke 11:13.

² Matthew 13:10–16.

you a greater understanding of the truth in God's Word. "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law [Word]."¹

Back to school. Meaningful Word time is not just reading time, but *study* time and listening to God time also. To fully digest, absorb and benefit from the Word, you need to stop and reflect on it and apply it to your personal situation. Ask, "How is that true?"—Not with a questioning or doubtful attitude, but with one of faith, knowing that you can learn even more lessons if you search further and dig deeper.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth."²—Or "*study* to show yourself approved to God," as the translators of the King James Version put it. That's really what it takes—diligent study!

Ask the Lord to help you be like the Christians of the Early Church in Berea, whom the apostle Paul commended for "searching the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."³

What to eat—milk or meat? Don't expect to understand everything in the Bible the first time you read it. That's not the way it works. Just as a newborn baby can't yet digest and assimilate most of the foods his parents and older brothers and sisters eat, a newly born-again Christian is not yet ready for the "meat" of God's Word. "Solid food belongs to those who are of full age."⁴ "As new-

¹ Psalm 119:18. See also Ephesians 1:17–18.

² 2 Timothy 2:15.

³ Acts 17:11.

⁴ Hebrews 5:14.

born babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.”¹

If you come to something you don't understand, just wrap it up in a little package of faith and put it on the shelf and wait for the Lord to unwrap it for you and reveal it to you later. Jesus even told His disciples, whom He had lived with and taught day and night for over three years, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”²

(For more on this point, see “Where to start” on page 36.)

Stay “hungry.” A lot also has to do with how much you desire to hear the Lord's Words, and your receptivity to what He says. Jesus promised, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled,”³ but the Bible also warns that those who are “rich”—already full of their own ideas or plans or supposed righteousness—would be sent away empty.⁴

Get specific. Pray for the Lord to lead you to verses or passages that will be specific answers to specific problems or questions you have. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”⁵ That's a promise!

The voice of the Word. The minute you turn your attention to God's written Word, you put your-

¹ 1 Peter 2:2.

² John 16:12.

³ Matthew 5:6.

⁴ Luke 1:53.

⁵ Matthew 7:7–8.

self in the position of being willing to listen to the Lord, so then He can begin to speak to you directly by giving you personal applications of what you're reading. You may have read a Scripture many times without drawing any special meaning from it, but then the Holy Spirit helps you apply it to your situation and it springs to life! This is what's known as the voice of His Word.

God can speak to you directly at *any* time, of course—straight from His mind to yours. You will probably find, however, that He will often do that by bringing to mind pertinent Scriptures that you have either read or memorized before. He will bring just the right verse to mind at just the right time. This is also the voice of the Word. In other words, you don't have to be reading the Word at the time for God to use it to speak to you.

Just ask Him to speak, and then listen with the ears of your spirit to what He has to say. Even if you think you don't know the Bible very well or don't know where to start to find the answers you need, God knows His own Book backwards and forwards, He knows just what you need in every situation, and He can bring things to mind that you sometimes barely remember reading. It helps, however, to already have as much relevant data entered into your memory banks as possible. You add to your database of Word every time you read or memorize it.

(For more on hearing from God directly, see *Hearing from Heaven*, another title in this series.)

The more dearly you begin to love His Word and read and study it, the more mature you will become and the more you'll find that God can speak to you loudly and clearly and supernaturally, right through the reading of His Word!

—D.B.B.



The Word is the secret of victory or defeat, success or failure! It all depends on how you treat the Word and how you live *in* it and live *on* it, or try to go on *without* it.

—D.B.B.



God calls His own Son the Word—His Word to us.¹ What is a word? A word is a means of communication. It conveys something. It means something. God wanted to show the world His love, so what did He do? You can't see love and you can't see God, so He sent His Word—in *Jesus*. He expressed His love in Jesus. He communicated it in Jesus. Jesus *spoke* of God's love, He *showed* God's love, He *symbolized* God's love, He *manifested* God's love. Jesus was God's own message of love to us!

—D.B.B.



In Switzerland's Supreme Court building, there hangs a huge painting by Paul Robert entitled *Justice Instructing the Judges*. In the foreground are the various litigants—the wife against the husband, the architect against the builder, and so on. Above them stand the Swiss judges. How are they going to rightly judge the various cases?

The artist's answer is simply this: Justice—who is usually depicted blindfolded, with her sword pointing straight up—is this time *not* blindfolded and her sword points downward to a book on which is written "The Word of God."

¹ John 1:1–14.

Practical Tips

W*hat version of the Bible is best?* The King James Version (KJV, officially known as the Authorized Version of the Bible) is considered by many to be the most accurate, the most inspired, and the most poetic English translation. It has been in use for nearly 400 years, and is still the most well known and most recognized. Some people find its seventeenth-century Elizabethan English (the language of Shakespeare) rather difficult to understand at first, but most soon learn to appreciate its beauty. In fact, the King James Version is widely regarded as the greatest masterpiece of English literature.

Of the many modern English versions now available, the New King James Version¹ is arguably the best because it retains many of the best qualities of the King James Version. Archaic words have

¹© Thomas Nelson, Inc.

been replaced with their modern equivalents and grammar and punctuation have been updated, but for the most part, the meaning and overall inspiration of the original King James Version have been retained. For those reasons, it is the version usually quoted in this booklet and other titles in the *Get Activated!* series. However, if you are able to understand the *original* King James Version despite the old English, we would recommend *that* over any other version for your Bible reading and study.

Other translations are considered by many to be neither as inspired or as true to the original Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) texts, and some modern versions have serious flaws. Nevertheless, you may find it helpful to also have a copy of another modern English translation so you can refer to it when the meaning of a certain verse or passage seems unclear the way it is worded in your King James Bible. Besides the New King James, The New International Version¹ and The Living Bible² are probably the best two for this purpose.

Bible study helps, Bible commentaries, and other Christian literature. Good teachers are a shortcut to learning. A classic example of this can be found in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, which is told in the eighth chapter of the Book of Acts:

On the road from Jerusalem to Gaza, Philip, a deacon in the Early Church, met a eunuch of “great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians.” The eunuch was sitting in his chariot, reading the Book of Isaiah, and Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. “How can I,” the

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eunuch answered, “unless someone guides me?” Now it so happened that the eunuch was reading from chapter 53 of Isaiah, which contains a number of very specific prophecies about the first coming of the Messiah—prophecies which Jesus had fulfilled to the smallest detail! So Philip “opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.” As a result, the man received Jesus as his Savior.¹ Philip was a good teacher!

You also can benefit from what more experienced Christians have learned through *their* study.

A good Bible concordance will help you quickly locate verses when you can only remember one or two key words. (A Bible concordance is an alphabetical index of words found in the Bible, and the references of verses where these words appear.) Concordances range in size and depth from huge tomes such as *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*² to the very brief concordances found in the appendixes of many Bibles. Because the larger concordances are more thorough, they’re more likely to include the reference for the verse you’re looking for, but you may have to peruse quite a few entries before you find it. Compact concordances are handy, but because they contain fewer entries, they’re less likely to have what you’re looking for. *Cruden’s Concordance*³ strikes a happy medium. Most computer Bible programs have built-in concordance functions which are excellent.

Some of the most time-honored Bible study helps and commentaries are: *Halley’s Bible*

¹ Acts 8:26–39. ²© Holman Bible Pub. ³© Barbour & Co.

⁴© Zondervan Pub. House ⁵© Hendrickson Publishers

⁶© Thomas Nelson, Inc. ⁷© B.B. Kirkbride Bible Co.

*Handbook*⁴, *Nave's Topical Bible*⁵, *Nelson's Bible Dictionary*⁶, and the *Thompson Chain Reference Bible*⁷. Some of these are built-in features of some computer Bible study programs. The downside to most of these older, scholarly works is that they often put more emphasis on historical detail than practical Christianity. Study helps that major on more pertinent topics to everyday living include *Discovering Truth: Basic Christianity*¹, *Discovering Truth: Keys to Happier Living*², and *Key Bible Verses*³.

There are also many good Bible-based devotional books available, including *Daily Might*⁴, *Daily Light*⁵, the *Mountain Streams* books by David Brandt Berg⁶, and the *Streams in the Desert* series by Mrs. Charles Cowman⁷. These can be very helpful, especially when you're not yet very familiar with the Bible yourself.

Other Christian literature also provides worthwhile reading: testimonies of faith and God's power, inspirational poems, anecdotes, and fiction that promotes Christian faith and values, biographies of dedicated Christians, etc. Also recommended is *From Jesus—With Love*⁸, a collection of heartwarming comfort and instruction received in prophecy from the Master Teacher of all, Jesus Himself.

Where to start. The Bible is one book you shouldn't start reading for the first time at page one. But sad to say, that's what most people do—and

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they get bogged down in Numbers or Deuteronomy, or lose interest and quit reading before they make it to the most important part.

Begin your reading of the Bible with the first four books of the New Testament—the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—which chronicle Jesus' life and ministry. The Gospel of John is perhaps the best to read first, as it contains the most actual words of Jesus. You may even want to read all of the Gospels, or portions of them, more than once before moving on.

The Book of Acts is important because it not only recounts many of the main events of the first Christians, but it also can serve as a blueprint for Christian living and evangelism today.

The rest of the New Testament—the epistles and Book of Revelation—can be rather difficult to understand at first, but if you pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you,¹ you'll find many beautiful passages and powerful promises there.² Don't miss 1 Corinthians 13, the Love Chapter!

In the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms has been a source of inspiration and comfort to millions for thousands of years. The Book of Proverbs offers much wisdom and food for thought. So many fascinating and lesson-filled stories and accounts of God's miraculous power can be found in other books of the Old Testament, that it may take you a while to read them all. But don't get bogged down with the detailed instructions and rituals of Leviticus or lengthy genealogies like those in Numbers and 1 Chronicles. If a passage doesn't hold your interest, move on to something that does.

¹ John 16:13.

² 2 Peter 1:4.

Mary and Martha—the sisters of Lazarus (the man whom Jesus raised from the dead)—were among Jesus' closest friends and followers. The two sisters expressed their love for Him in different ways. Once when Jesus was teaching in their home, Martha “was distracted with much serving,” but Mary “sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word.”

When Martha complained to Jesus that her sister should be helping her, Jesus replied, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”¹ He told her, in effect, that Mary was right in putting His *Word* first. Jesus appreciated Martha's service, but He knew that her spiritual needs were more important than His physical ones.

Martha in the kitchen, serving with her hands;
Occupied for Jesus, with her pots and pans.
Loving Him, yet fevered, burdened to the brim,
Careful, troubled Martha, occupied for Him.

Mary on the footstool, eyes upon her Lord;
Occupied with Jesus, drinking in His Word.
This the one thing needful, all else strangely dim:
Loving, resting Mary, occupied with Him.

So may we, like Mary, choose the better part.
Resting in His presence—hands and feet and heart;
Drinking in His wisdom, strengthened with His grace;
Waiting for the summons, eyes upon His face.

When it comes, we're ready, spirit, will, and nerve;
Mary's heart to worship, Martha's hands to serve;
This the rightful order, as our lamps we trim,²
Occupied with Jesus, then occupied for Him!

—Lois Reynolds Carpenter

¹ Luke 10:38–42. ² Matthew 25:1–13.

Cycle of life

“As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”

—*Isaiah 55:10–11*



Warning! Please refer to the Maker's Manual before operating your machine!

Intelligent people always thoroughly study the instructions to a valuable machine before they attempt to operate it—and as a result, they save themselves a lot of time and trouble and possible permanent damage to their equipment as well. But those who are too impatient to read the book first, or who think they already know how to operate it, or who don't want to admit that they need the help of the instruction book usually have nothing but trouble!

Why struggle through life needlessly when your Creator, your Maker, your Manufacturer, God, has had some men of His write a Maker's instruction manual with definite diagrams and already-stated specifications for the complicated business of living and operating your body, mind and spirit? You could waste an awful lot of time, and do an awful lot of damage to yourself and a lot of other people by not taking time to read the Book first, to learn the right way to operate your soul in order to save it for His use without abuse, and to get it finally safe to Heaven! Don't take chances! Read and follow the Book!

—*D.B.B.*

When to read. Where in your busy schedule are you supposed to find even a few minutes each day to read the Word? Well, here's your chance to put *God* to the test by putting this *promise* of His to the test: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these [other] things shall be added to you."¹

Conversely, if you get so busy with other things that you think are more urgent or more important that you don't have time for God's Word, things are bound to go wrong.

Put the Word first, and the Lord will always give you time to do the other things you need to do. One way He will probably do that is by helping you do some of those other things better and in less time. You will soon find that putting Him and His Word *first* solves not only the problem of where to find time for it, but many of your other problems as well. It creates a winning situation all the way around! When you see the difference it makes in your relationship with the Lord and in your life in general, you'll wonder how you ever got by without it!

The best time to read the Word is when *you* are at your best and can give it your full attention. For most people that's first thing in the morning, before their busy day begins. Once other responsibilities are upon you, it's much harder to block out the press of the day in order to fully concentrate on and absorb God's Word.

If the start of the day doesn't work for you, find a time that does—perhaps as soon as you arrive at your workplace, or even on the way, if someone else is driving. Or if you're a busy mother, try to do

¹ Matthew 6:33.

it as soon as you've gotten the kids off to school or the baby down for her morning nap. For those times when you'd rather be read to than read, audio versions of several translations of the Bible on cassette tape or CD are available at most Christian bookstores—or you can make your own recordings of your favorite Bible passages by reading them on tape.

If it's not possible to set aside a larger block of time, try two or three times of 10 or 15 minutes each. Turn your coffee break into a Word break, or use part of your lunch hour. You'll be surprised at how much better the rest of your day will go, and so will those you work with. The evening is another great time, especially for reading the Word with other members of your family—a few minutes around the dinner table, an uplifting Bible story with the children before you tuck them in bed, a quiet moment around the Word before you all turn in. (Whenever you choose to have Word time with your family, it will bring you close together like nothing else.) Reading the Word for a few minutes before you go to sleep can set your mind at ease after a busy day. “Cast your cares on the Lord”¹ and you'll sleep better!

When you find a time that works for you, stick to it each day until it becomes a habit.

Plan your reading. It always helps to have a goal and a plan for achieving it, but be sure your goal is realistic. Start with something you know you can do, like spending 10 or 15 minutes each day reading the Word, and keeping it up for one week. Once you master that, increase your reading times

¹ Psalm 55:22 NIV.

to 20 or 30 minutes each day. Or you could try to read one Gospel a week, and finish all four in one month. Or you could read on a topic that concerns you—worry, relations with others, comfort in time of personal loss, etc. (See *Discovering Truth: Keys to Happier Living* for clear, concise Bible studies on over 50 pertinent topics.)

A plan and routine can be helpful, but there will be days when something other than what you had planned to read would do you more good. Get in the habit of praying before you start to read, so if the Lord wants you to abandon your previously established plan that day in order to read something else, He will have a chance to show you.

Liven up your reading times by reading from different books of the Bible or a variety of other devotional materials. One day you could read several Psalms, the next a few chapters from one of the Gospels, and the next a few short passages from a devotional book like *Daily Might* or *From Jesus—With Love*. Or you could follow a similar plan over a longer period of time; spending one week reading through a Gospel, the next studying about one of the foundation topics of Christian faith as explained in *Discovering Truth: Bible Basics*, etc.

Quality, not quantity. Unlike almost anything else you might read—whether for information, recreation, or in the course of your work—God's Word *nourishes* your spirit. And just as it takes time to digest and assimilate a meal, it takes time to get the full benefit of the Word. You won't get that by skimming or speed-reading.

Read slowly and carefully, and take time to think and pray about what you're reading. If you find that you aren't comprehending or remembering what you've just read, slow down. Even if all you read is one verse or one short passage but you discover some new truth, or if you feel God's peace or comfort or presence, or if something causes you to think deeply, or if something stirs you to positive action, then your Word time will have been a success.

However, don't expect to feel a spiritual "rush" or make some big new discovery every single time that you read the Word. There will be times when you don't feel anything at all. That doesn't mean that you should stop reading or that your Word time is ineffective. Just as eating a meal strengthens your body whether you immediately feel strengthened or not, so reading the Word strengthens your spirit whether you feel the effects immediately or not.

Limit distractions. Try to find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted. If you can learn to think of this time as your daily appointment with the Lord—as important as any business appointment or other activity—you'll be less likely to let other things interfere. Hang a "Do Not Disturb" sign on your door. Take your phone off the hook or ask your secretary to hold all calls. Get your children busy with some activity that you know will hold their interest and that they can do safely on their own for a few minutes.

Then, before you start to read the Word, pray that your mind will be clear from distracting thoughts. Even when an especially busy day or a

major problem looms ahead, Jesus can help you set your concerns aside temporarily in order to concentrate on what you're reading.

Where to read. Some locations are obviously more conducive to reading the Word than others. A park bench may be too uncomfortable, but a cozy armchair may be too comfortable. Some people can wake up, roll over, turn on a light, and have profitable reading time first thing in the morning. Others wake up, roll over, turn on a light, and go back to sleep. Find what works for you.

“Warm up” by praising the Lord. King David the Psalmist said, “Come before [God’s] presence with singing ... and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.”¹ Take a few minutes before you start your Word time to praise and thank God for His goodness and blessings. That will help set the mood and get your mind off of other things. Think about the good things in your life and say a word of thanks to God for them. The *My King and I*² book provides a valuable resource of sample praises to God—try reading a page sometimes before starting your Word time.

If you know some songs of praise to the Lord, you can sing one of these at the start of your Word time, even if only in your heart; or if you have some praise songs on cassette or CD, you can listen to one or two of them.³ *The Wild Wind*⁴, an upbeat collection of praise Scriptures put to song, is a good choice for such an occasion.

¹ Psalm 100:2,4. ² © Aurora Production, Ltd. ³ Ephesians 5:19.

⁴ © Aurora Production, Ltd. ⁵ Deuteronomy 11:18.

Memorizing the Word. “Lay up these Words of Mine in your heart and in your soul.”⁵ The best way to retain the most important verses you come across as you read the Word is to memorize them. The ones you commit to memory become a part of you. They will strengthen your faith and be with you for life. The Holy Spirit can then more easily bring them to mind when they are the key to a situation or problem you face, and claiming them in prayer will become second nature.

Having important verses memorized, as well as knowing the reference of each (or at least what book and chapter of the Bible they’re in) will also prove helpful when you share the Word with others who need God’s truth and answers. If you’re a good student of the Word, you’ll become a good teacher of the Word.

The thought of memorizing parts of the Bible might seem daunting at first, but you’ll soon get the hang of it. Start by reading and rereading the verse you want to memorize. Then try to repeat all or part of it without looking at the text. You can also copy it into a notebook or type it up and print it out, so you’ll have it handy to review later.

Work at learning that verse for a minute or two several times a day until you can quote it without looking. You may have it memorized by the end of the first day, or it may take longer. Then choose another verse and memorize it. To help you not forget what you’ve memorized, review each verse at least twice a day for the next week or two, and then less frequently once you know it very well. Regularly reviewing what you know is vital to re-

taining it. Whatever you are able to memorize, at whatever speed, will soon pay off.

If you think you can't memorize the Word, it might help to realize how many things you have already memorized—at least one language, mathematical tables, phone numbers, addresses, birthdays, etc. Repetition is the law of memory. If you hear or read something often enough, you will remember it.

(If you'd like to start memorizing God's Word but don't know where to start, see the *Key Bible Verses* booklet, a collection of outstanding verses on 35 pertinent topics.)

Fill your heart and mind with God's good truth!

The Lord has given you the best computer ever constructed—your own mind—but it's up to you how you fill it. It has to be filled with something, good or bad, and your reflexes are mentally conditioned to react in a certain way according to what you have learned or experienced. That's why you could hardly accomplish anything more important than to memorize the Word of God.

God Himself is like the Great Central Computer. You can plug into Him and by His power, His Spirit, He can give you all the information, all the wisdom, and all the answers you need. If you'll be faithful to read, study, and memorize His Word, then He can spiel it off by the Spirit when you need it. He will just pop it up in your little computer whenever you make the right connection in your programming.

Once you've saturated your heart and mind with God's Word, you just need to be a yielded instrument. Then the Lord can sit down at the keyboard and get out of your computer the information that He wants, for your little memory chips in your head will have the whole story, as much as you've programmed them to contain!

—D.B.B.



Isn't it wonderful to have God's Word for our encouragement? Absorb it into the very fiber of your being, for it is His Word by His Spirit in His love that makes you strong!

—D.B.B.



Someday the only Word of God you may have is what you've implanted in your heart!

—D.B.B.

Where did Susanna find time every day for God and His Word? She had 17 children. Yet somehow she managed to spend one hour each day reading the Word and praying for her children. Obviously, she made that a priority. And it paid off, especially in what two of her sons, John and Charles, accomplished for the Lord when they grew up. John Wesley led a religious revival that swept across England and Wales, and also founded the Methodist Church. His younger brother, Charles, was also a renowned preacher and wrote over 6,000 hymns.



Eternally true, eternally yours

“There has not failed one word of all His good promise” (1 Kings 8:56).

“Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven” (Psalm 119:89).

“The entirety of Your Word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever” (Psalm 119:160).

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever” (Isaiah 40:8).

“Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My Words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

“The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

“But the Word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Peter 1:25).



Within this ample volume lies
The mystery of mysteries.
Happiest they of human race
To whom their God has given grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch, to force the way;
But better had they ne'er been born
That read to doubt or read to scorn.

—*Sir Walter Scott*

Obstacles to Benefiting from the Word

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against *spiritual* hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”¹

Whether you realize it or not, spiritual forces are constantly trying to influence you through your thoughts. The Devil and his minions aren’t as power-ful as God and His angels, but they *are* just as real and just as active. Why do they try so hard to enter your thoughts? Because if they can influence your thoughts, they can influence your actions.

In the same passage as the verse quoted above, the apostle Paul explains how to stand strong against the Devil’s attacks—by putting on

¹ Ephesians 6:12.

the spiritual armor of God. He then explains that armor by way of analogy, comparing it to the armor worn by the Roman soldiers of his day: "Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."¹

Of the six items listed, only one is an offensive weapon—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." So what do you suppose would be your spiritual adversary's first objective?—To *disarm* you! If he can get you to put down your sword, not only are you no longer a threat to him or his plans, but you become an easier prey. That in itself is reason enough to make your Word time really count. Your spiritual life depends on it!

The Bible also tells us that we are not to be ignorant of the Devil's schemes.² To be forewarned is to be forearmed. If you're aware of the Devil's most common tactics, you can more easily recognize and counter them when he springs them on you—and he will! Here are four to watch out for:

Lack of concentration. Have you ever finished reading something—a book, an article, a report, or whatever—and realized you could hardly remember any of what you'd just read? You may have

¹ Ephesians 6:13–17. ² 2 Corinthians 2:11.

skimmed hundreds or thousands of words of text, but nothing registered because you weren't really concentrating. If it was just a magazine article or novel that you had read, it may not have been any great loss; but if it was God's Word, you really missed something!

The key to overcoming this trap of the Devil is to *pray* before you read. Ask God to open your spiritual eyes and to help you be alert. Pray that His truths will sink in and become part of you. Then, as you read, make a concerted effort to resist distractions and to discipline your mind to think about what you're reading. Some people also find it helpful to read aloud, underline or highlight main points as they read, or copy key verses into a notebook.

Do your part, and you'll be amazed at how much the Lord will help you get out of the Word you read.

"Busyness." Don't be surprised if every time you sit down to read the Word for a few moments, your mind is flooded with thoughts of other things you could be doing instead: planning what you're going to have for dinner or what you're going to do tomorrow, making a phone call you forgot to make earlier, or taking care of some other unfinished business. Before you know it, you're so busy doing something else that you forget all about the time you meant to spend with the Lord and His Word. You've just been taken in by another of the Devil's traps—busyness!

Of course, many of those other things you think of *are* important and they do need to be taken care of—just not during your Word time. Keep a notepad

and pen handy so when something comes to mind that you need to take care of later, you can write it down and not have to worry about forgetting it again. That then leaves you free to give your Word time your full attention.

Skepticism and doubt. In this age of science and technology, to many people seeing is believing. Until something can be proven scientifically, to them it isn't so. But that's just opposite of the way faith works. With faith, believing is seeing. First, you must accept things by faith, just because God says they are so, *then* you will understand or "see." This is precisely the point Saint Augustine (354–430 AD) was making when he said, "Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore seek not to understand that you might believe, but believe that you may understand."

So where do you get faith to begin with? The Bible tells us that faith comes through hearing the Word of God.¹ "Hearing" in this sense means not only reading or listening to the Word, but accepting, absorbing and letting it become part of you. The more you take in the Word, the more your faith will grow.

But some people never find faith because they don't read the Word in the right frame of mind. Those who take a skeptical approach find fault, not faith. They also don't realize that the Devil is behind their doubts. This trick of his goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden, when Satan tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. In order to get her to disobey God, he had to first get her to doubt God's

¹ Romans 10:17.

Word, so he asked the seemingly innocent question, “Has God indeed said...?”¹ Don’t you fall for the same trick!

Ungodly attitudes of the world around you.

Have you noticed how the most “enlightened” societies of the most developed countries seem to think they can get along just fine without God? From schoolbooks to the big screen, He is increasingly the object of ridicule and cynicism, and those who take His Word at face value and try to model their lives after it are often portrayed as religious fanatics, or at the least a bit strange. But just because the scoffers are in the majority doesn’t make them right. “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction,” Jesus said, “and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”² Don’t let others’ unbelief and ungodly attitudes stand in the way of *you* finding that narrow gate!

¹ Genesis 3:1–6.

² Matthew 7:13–14.

Sing them over again to me,
Wonderful words of life.
Let me more of their beauty see,
Wonderful words of life.
Words of life and beauty,
Teach me faith and duty:

Beautiful words, wonderful words,
Wonderful words of life.
Beautiful words, wonderful words,
Wonderful words of life.

—*Philip P. Bliss.*



The words of the Bible *are* Words of life! If I get down in spirit or tired, or the Devil tries to discourage me, or my strength fails, I find strength and blessing in the Word of God.

If only others who are troubled and discouraged and feel defeated could realize that in the Bible they will find the help and comfort they need, what a different world this would be, and how many problems would be solved! And if nations would live by its standards, what a difference that would make!

Countless lives have been utterly transformed by the reading of God's Word—some of them raised to the greatest heights from the lowest depths. Indeed there *is* life and power in the Word of God!

Some people know this and yet they neglect to read it. Then they wonder why they get down in spirit and lack in Christian graces. Everything else is given time and considered more important, and only just a few ragged ends of an hour—a few minutes—are given to the reading that would have made the day beautiful and the problems so much easier to solve.

—*V.B.B.*



The Bible contains: the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the happiness of believers. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its history is true, its decisions immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's comfort, the soldier's sword, the Christian's character. Here Heaven is opened, the gates of Hell disclosed. Christ is the subject and the glory of God its end! It is a mine of wealth and health to the soul and a river of pleasure. It is given to you here in this life and will be opened up at the Judgment. It is established forever!



"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."¹ Commenting on that prophecy about the days immediately preceding Jesus' return, Sir Isaac Newton [1642–1727] once wrote that if it were true, a new mode of traveling would need to be invented. Knowledge would be so increased, he reasoned, that man would be able to travel at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

A few years later, the French philosopher, writer, and outspoken skeptic Voltaire said: "Now look at the mighty mind of Newton, who discovered gravitation; then he began to study the book called the Bible. It seems in order to credit its fabulous nonsense, he believed that the knowledge of mankind will be so increased that we shall be able to travel fifty miles an hour! The poor do-tard!"

Today even a skeptic would have to say, "Newton was a wise philosopher, and Voltaire a poor old fool."

¹ Daniel 12:4.

Live the Word

To grow as a Christian, you need to put what you read in the Word into practice—to take what God says at face value and do what He says to do. “If you know these things,” Jesus said, “blessed are you if you *do* them.”¹

When you read about Jesus showing love and consideration to all men, ask Him to help you be more like Him in that respect, and He will.

When you read about Jesus humbly serving those He was leading into the kingdom of Heaven and He says, “I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you,”² believe that He is talking to *you*. Become a “slave of all,” and you will be great in His eyes.³

When you read “whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight,”⁴

¹ John 13:17.

³ Mark 10:42–44.

² John 13:15.

⁴ 1 John 3:22.

do your best to obey and please the Lord, and see Him answer your prayers wonderfully.

When you read that it is more blessed to give than to receive,¹ give of yourself and your material things to others in need, and watch God repay you many times over.²

When Jesus says, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you,”³ let Him use you to share the Good News of salvation through Jesus with others, and see Him transform lives before your very eyes.

¹ Acts 20:35.

² Luke 6:38.

³ John 20:21.

“Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

— James 1:22–25



You can read all the Word you want, but if it doesn't come to life by the Spirit, it's not going to do anything! You can quote it word for word right out of the Bible, but if you don't live it in love, it won't do any good.

—Maria David



(Message from Jesus:) I have spoken many Words unto My children throughout all the ages. I have revealed unto them truth, truth, and more truth. I have given unto them many revelations through My Words, and it is up to them to choose to follow, to believe, to receive. Those who do, prosper and grow; those who do not, fall along the wayside of limited fruitfulness.¹ There are many today who believe My Words, but do not receive all that I have to say. They are able to accomplish some, but I cannot use them to the full, because they do not receive all that I give, or all that I have given, nor all that I will give.

That is their choice, and this is the choice that I give unto each one of you: whether to forge ahead and continue to receive and believe the Words that I give, or to remain on the plateau at which you have arrived. This is always the choice that is given to My children. Will they

¹ Matthew 13:3–9, 18–23.

continue to climb, or will they be satisfied where they are? If they choose to be satisfied, then I will use them there on that plateau, and they will be fruitful there. But those who choose to carry on up the mountain will go to new heights and receive the blessings and the fruitfulness that are higher up the mountain.

These are the Words that I have given, and this is the choice that I put before you: Do you come to Me with an open or a closed heart? Have you decided that you have climbed this far and will climb no further, or will you climb further in faith? This is what I ask you: that you decide, that you search your heart.

Know this, that I love those that remain on the plateau, and I love those that continue the climb. But they that continue to climb will ascend higher and see more and partake of those things which are higher up the mountain. Each one must make his own choice.



Love the Author, love the Book

There once was a young woman who read a certain book and remarked to a friend that it was one of the dullest books she had ever read. Not long after this, she met a young man with whom she promptly fell in love.

One evening she said to him, "I have a book in my library which was written by a man whose name is the same as yours. Isn't that a coincidence?"

"I don't think so," he replied. "I wrote that book."

The woman sat up half that night, rereading the book. This time, she thought it was the most interesting book she had ever read! What made the difference? She now knew and loved the author.

—*Dr. Howard W. Pope, adapted*

Spread the Word!

If you want to see the Word *really* come to life, share it with others! As you see it touch and transform other lives as it has yours, as you see the Lord manifest Himself to them through His Word like He has to you, your faith will grow even more.

You may not realize how much you're learning from the Word while you're reading it or even when you try to apply it to your own life, but you'll be absolutely amazed at the wisdom and insight you've gained from the Word once you begin to use it to help others with *their* problems and point them to the Answer Man—Jesus! Just ask Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, to bring to your remembrance what will help them most, and He will.¹

The key to successfully sharing your faith with others is to stay close to Jesus. You do that by spending time with Him in prayer, and by filling up

¹ John 14:26.

on the Word and then doing your best to obey it and please Him. As Jesus said, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good [things]. ... For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”¹ Fill up your heart, and you won’t have any trouble knowing what to say. The more Word you take in, the easier and more natural it will be for you to pour it out to others.

If at first you feel shy or embarrassed about sharing the Word with others, here’s a good promise to claim: “I will speak of Your testimonies ... and will not be ashamed.”² Just pray for the Lord’s help and try it. Claim “Holy Spirit power”!³ Talk to others about Jesus and the Word—then watch Him work wonders! The more you do that and the more you see Him work, the easier it will get.

When others see you spreading the Word, and when they see what a wonderful difference it’s made in your life and theirs, they will want to do the same. Soon they’ll be spreading God’s Word to yet others, and you’ll all be part of the marvelous chain reaction which began when Jesus commissioned His first disciples to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”⁴ He’s out to win the world with His love, one heart at a time, and His plan is simple: Teach others to teach others. As the apostle Paul wrote, “The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”⁵

“He who waters will also be watered himself.”⁶
As you give of what you have been given by God,

¹ Luke 6:45.² Psalm 119:46.³ Acts 1:8.⁴ Mark 16:15.⁵ 2 Timothy 2:2.⁶ Proverbs 11:25.

He will give you more. And the first half of that verse promises that “the *generous* soul will be made *rich*.” The more you spread the Word, the more of His blessings you’ll receive—here and now, as well as when you arrive in Heaven one day. Jesus will bless you with a closer, deeper relationship with Him. Those you lead to Him will be eternally grateful to you, and you will have a special shine in Heaven. He has promised: “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.”¹

God has blessed you with life and love and truth and the key to *all* your needs through His Word, but He doesn’t want it to stop there. “Freely you have received, freely give.”² Pass it on!

¹Daniel 12:3.

²Matthew 10:8.

Think about it...

The Word is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me.

—*Martin Luther*



People need a *standard* to live by, and this is what God has given us! If you don't know what to do, if you can't decide what's right, go to your Bible. It makes every path very plain. Let it rule your heart and guide your feet!

—*V.B.B.*



The answers we find in the Word are not always quick or easy answers, but they are in fact the only real answers.



The Bible is to be believed and understood in the plain and obvious meaning of its passages; for I cannot persuade myself that a book intended for the instruction and conversion of the whole world should cover its true meaning in such mystery and doubt, so that none but critics and philosophers can discover it.

—*Daniel Webster*



Some people are critical of everything; some embrace anything. The wise weigh all things by the Word.



There's nothing more important to your spiritual life than the Word.



To read the Word without reflecting is like eating without digesting.

What makes the difference is not how many times you have been through the Bible, but how many times and how thoroughly the Bible has been through you.

—Gypsy Smith



The secret of spiritual power and victory and overcoming and fruitfulness and fire and life and light and *everything* is the Word!

—D.B.B.



You can't understand all you read in the Word, but you can obey what you do understand.



Besides the once-and-for-all cleansing of salvation, you need the daily cleansing of the Word from daily sin.¹



His story makes history. His Word and man's reaction to it can alter the course of world events.



The Word finds us where we are, and, with our permission, will take us where we ought to go.



You believe God's Word as much as you follow what it says!



Men do not reject the Bible because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them.

¹ Psalm 119:9; John 15:3; Ephesians 5:25–26.

Appendix

What Is the Bible?

The word *Bible* was derived from the Greek word *biblion*, meaning “book,” but it is far more than a mere book. It is “the Word of God” and the foundation of Christian faith and living. It reveals God to us, it tells us of God’s basic plan for man, and it contains unparalleled truth and instruction, but it goes even beyond that! Its words are *spirit* and *life*.¹ By them we are able to partake of the divine nature—to be more godly, more like Jesus.²

The Bible is actually a *collection* of books—66 in all—which are the written record of messages God spoke to about 40 people whom He chose as His spokesmen. Although the Bible was *recorded* by men, it was *written* by God.³

¹ John 6:63.

² 2 Peter 1:4.

³ 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 1:1–2; 2 Peter 1:21.

⁴ John 1:14.

The Word “became flesh” in Jesus Christ.⁴

The Bible contains two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. (*Testament* in this case means “covenant” or “contract,” so the Old and New Testaments can be thought of as the old and new binding agreements between God and man.)

The dates that some of the Old Testament’s 39 books were first recorded is uncertain, but scholars generally agree that they were written over a period of about 1,000 years, from the fourteenth to the fourth century BC. They were written in Hebrew, except for a few passages in the Book of Daniel which were written in Aramaic. The Old Testament prepared the way for the New, which was ushered in with Jesus’ coming.

The 27 books of the New Testament were written over a period of about 100 years, in Greek. They tell of Jesus’ life and ministry and the growth of the Early Church, and present the basics of Christian faith.

In the old covenant God promised to bless the Israelites if they would worship Him only and be ruled by His law—which He gave through Moses around 1300 BC. The new covenant was announced by Jesus to His disciples at the Last Supper, the night before His death. As He passed a communal wine cup, He told them that the wine symbolized “the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.”¹

Over 600 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Jeremiah foresaw a day when God would make a new covenant with His people. Under this new covenant, God would write His laws on people’s

¹ Luke 22:20; see also John 1:17.

² Jeremiah 31:31–34.

hearts rather than on tablets of stone.² Jesus said that the second covenant is the fulfillment of what was promised in the first.¹

The arrangement of the Old Testament in Christian Bibles was inherited from the pre-Christian Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint. It has four divisions: the historical books (the five books of Moses [also known as the Pentateuch]), plus twelve other historical books (Joshua through Esther), the poetic books (Job through the Song of Solomon), and the prophets (Isaiah through Malachi). They follow a general chronological order, with some overlaps.

The New Testament contains five narrative books—the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The Gospels deal with the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Book of Acts tells of some of the major happenings of the Early Church over the next 30 years, and is a sort of sequel to the Gospels.

Twenty-one letters, or epistles, follow the historical narratives. Thirteen of these letters were clearly written by the apostle Paul, while the remaining eight were written by other apostles or others closely associated with the apostles. In the last book in the New Testament, Revelation, the apostle John recounts prophetic visions of the Endtime and Jesus' triumphant return.

The first mention in the Bible of anyone writing anything down is when God told Moses to "write this for a memorial in the book."² The stories of the patriarchs found in Genesis had been passed from generation to generation by word of mouth before

¹ Matthew 5:17.

² Exodus 17:14.

this. The messages of the prophets were delivered orally before they were written. Narratives of the life and ministry of Jesus were repeated orally for years before they were written down. None of the original biblical documents have ever been discovered, but many ancient copies have—including multiple copies of some portions. The Bible translations we have today are based on those copies.

Basic Bible Outline

The 66 books of the Bible were recorded by about 40 men, over a period of 1,500 years (the 14th century BC to the first century AD). The following outline shows how the books of the Bible (listed in the order they appear in the Bible) are arranged:

THE OLD TESTAMENT—39 books (written over a period of about 1,000 years: 14th to 4th century BC)

Historical

The Pentateuch (also known as the Torah, the books of Moses, the Book of the Law)

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy

Other historical

6. Joshua
7. Judges
8. Ruth
9. I Samuel
10. II Samuel
11. I Kings

12. II Kings
13. I Chronicles
14. II Chronicles
15. Ezra
16. Nehemiah
17. Esther

Poetical

18. Job
19. Psalms
20. Proverbs
21. Ecclesiastes
22. Song of Solomon

Prophetic

Major Prophets

23. Isaiah
24. Jeremiah
25. Lamentations
26. Ezekiel
27. Daniel

Minor Prophets

28. Hosea
29. Joel
30. Amos
31. Obadiah
32. Jonah
33. Micah
34. Nahum
35. Habakkuk
36. Zephaniah
37. Haggai
38. Zechariah
39. Malachi

THE NEW TESTAMENT—27 books (written during the first century AD)

Narratives

The Gospels

1. Matthew
2. Mark
3. Luke
4. John

Historical

5. The Acts of the Apostles

The Epistles

6. Romans
7. I Corinthians
8. II Corinthians
9. Galatians
10. Ephesians
11. Philippians
12. Colossians
13. I Thessalonians
14. II Thessalonians
15. I Timothy
16. II Timothy
17. Titus
18. Philemon
19. Hebrews
20. James
21. I Peter
22. II Peter
23. I John
24. II John
25. III John
26. Jude

Prophetic

27. Revelation

“Precious Promises” Sampler

Here are just a few of God’s promises to *you*. There are hundreds and hundreds more that cover—directly or indirectly—every problem you will ever face in life. As you study the Bible, see how many more you can find. Mark or take note of them so you’ll have them when you need them.

Remember, God’s promises are *contracts*. Most have conditions attached. Take a moment to think about each one in terms of *God’s* part and *your* part. (In the following list, only the most pertinent parts of some verses are given in order to highlight the promise.)

Eternal salvation

“He who believes in the Son *has* everlasting life” (John 3:36).

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37).

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25).

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

The Holy Spirit

“If you ... know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:13).

“It is to your advantage that I [Jesus] go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [Holy Spirit] will

not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7).

“‘And it shall come to pass in the Last Days,’ says God, ‘that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams’” (Acts 2:17).

Answers to prayer

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

“If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7).

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14–15).

God's love

“I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39).

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8).

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7–8).

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Overcoming personal weaknesses

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

“Then I [God] will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 11:19).

Giving

“When you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matthew 6:3–4).

“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use [to give], it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

“It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Rewards for doing God's will

“All these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 28:2).

“If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land” (Isaiah 1:19).

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:10).

Strength and power

“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9).

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You. ... They go from strength to strength” (Psalm 84:5, 7).

“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Protection

“The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Psalm 34:7).

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you” (Isaiah 43:2).

Supply

“No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11).

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22).

Overcoming temptation

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations" (2 Peter 2:9).

Help in time of trouble

"This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34:6).

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15).

"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him" (Psalm 91:14—15).

Comfort

“The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit” (Psalm 34:18).

“This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has given me life” (Psalm 119:50).

“I [Jesus] will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18, KJV).

Healing

“He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions” (Psalm 107:20).

“To you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2).

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).

Freedom from fear

“I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4).

“You [God] will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3).

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18).

The Parables Jesus Told

- Barren fig tree, The: Luke 13:6–9.
Dragnet, The: Matthew 13:47–50.
Evil sharecroppers, The: Matthew 21:33–44;
Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–18.
Fig tree leafing, The: Matthew 24:32; Mark
13:28–29.
Friend at midnight, The: Luke 11:5–8.
Good Samaritan, The: Luke 10:30–37.
Good Shepherd, The: John 10:1–16.
Great supper, The: Luke 14:15–24.
Hidden treasure, The: Matthew 13:44.
Importunate (unrelenting) widow, The: Luke
18:1–8.
Laborers in the vineyard, The: Matthew 20:1–
16.
Leaven (yeast): Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20–
21.
Lost piece of money, The: Luke 15:8–10.
Lost sheep, The: Matthew 18:12–14; Luke 15:3–
7.
Man taking a far journey, The: Mark 13:34–37.
Marriage of the king's son, The: Matthew 22:1–
14.
Mustard seed, The: Matthew 13:31–32; Mark
4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19.
Pearl of great price, The: Matthew 13:45–46.
Pharisee and the publican, The: Luke 18:9–14.
Pounds, The (KJV): Luke 19:11–27.
Prodigal son and his older brother, The: Luke
15:11–32.

Rich fool, The: Luke 12:16–21.

Rich man and Lazarus, The: Luke 16:19–31.

Seed growing secretly, The: Mark 4:26–29.

Servants waiting for their Lord, The: Luke 12:35–40.

Sower, The: Matthew 13:3–9, 18–23; Mark 4:14–20; Luke 8:5–8, 11–15.

Talents, The: Matthew 25:14–30.

Tares, The: Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43.

Ten virgins: Matthew 25:1–13.

Two debtors: Luke 7:41–47.

Two sons, The: Matthew 21:28–32.

Unjust steward, The: Luke 16:1–9.

Unmerciful servant, The: Matthew 18:23–35.

Vine, The: John 15:1–6.

Wise and foolish builders, The: Matthew 7:24–27; Luke 6:47–49.

Fulfilled Bible Prophecies

The Bible contains hundreds of specific prophecies about people, nations, places, times and events which have already been fulfilled down to the smallest detail. Some of these were fulfilled almost immediately, others took hundreds of years, but each came to pass exactly as God said they would. (There are also many other prophecies in the Bible that are yet to be fulfilled, which will be fulfilled just as surely.) “I am the Lord. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass. ... I will say the word and perform it.”¹

The following list contains over sixty of the most outstanding fulfilled prophecies, arranged in two groups: those fulfilled by Jesus, and others from both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Each group is arranged chronologically, by date of fulfillment. In some cases, the fulfillments are not recorded in the Bible but are well documented historically. In such cases, the events and dates according to historical records are cited. Historians are not in complete agreement about when some of these events took place, so the dates listed here may vary from those listed in your Bible’s marginal notes or other reference material.

Some prophecies have more than one fulfillment, such as the prophecies regarding the conversion of the Gentiles. In those cases, the references listed below are intended as examples.

Prophecies fulfilled by Jesus

Jesus born of a virgin: Isaiah 7:14 (c. 742 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 1:22–23; Luke 1:26–35 (4 BC).

Jesus born in Bethlehem: Micah 5:2 (710 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:1–7 (4 BC).

Jesus, the Messiah, comes out of Egypt: Hosea 11:1 (c. 740 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 2:13–23 (1 BC).

Jesus' ministry in Galilee: Isaiah 9:1–2 (c. 740 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 4:12–16 (27 AD).

Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem: Zechariah 9:9 (c. 487 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 21:2–10 (30 AD).

Jesus hated without a cause: Psalm 69:4 (c. 980 BC). Fulfilled: John 15:23–25 (30 AD).

False witnesses accuse Jesus: Psalm 27:12 (c. 980 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 26:60–61 (30 AD).

Jesus smitten and spat upon: Isaiah 50:6 (c. 712 BC). Fulfilled: Mark 14:65; John 18:22; 19:2–3 (30 AD).

Jesus, on trial for His life, makes no attempt at an oral defense: Isaiah 53:7 (c. 712 BC). Fulfilled: John 19:6–9 (30 AD).

Exact year of Jesus' crucifixion: Daniel 9:25–26 (The Hebrew word *shabua*, translated as “week” in some Bible versions, means “a unit of seven”—in this case seven *years*. [See also Genesis 29:27.] So 69 “weeks” are 483 years) (c. 538 BC). Fulfilled: In 453 BC, Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of the Persian Empire, gave the Jews permission “to restore and to build Jerusalem,” and Jesus was “cut off” in 30 AD—483 years later.

¹Ezekiel 12:25.

Jesus' executioners cast lots for His clothing: Psalm 22:18 (c. 980 BC). Fulfilled: John 19:23–24 (30 AD).

Jesus dies, not for any crime He has committed, but for the sins of others: Isaiah 53:8–12 (c. 712 BC). Fulfilled: John 18:38; 19:30 (30 AD). (See also 1 Peter 3:18.)

Jesus given gall and vinegar to drink: Psalm 69:21 (c. 980 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 27:34; John 19:29 (30 AD).

Jesus' hands and feet pierced: Psalm 22:16 (c. 980 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 27:35–37 (30 AD). (See also Luke 24:36–40.)

Jesus is crucified with common criminals: Isaiah 53:12 (c. 712 BC). Fulfilled: Luke 23:32–33 (30 AD).

Jesus mocked on the cross: Psalm 22:7, 8; 109:25 (c. 980 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 27:39–44 (30 AD).

None of Jesus' bones are broken during crucifixion: Psalm 22:17; 34:20 (c. 980 BC). Fulfilled: John 19:31–33, 36 (30 AD). (See also Exodus 12:46 and John 1:29.)

Jesus' side is pierced during crucifixion: Zechariah 12:10 (487 BC). Fulfilled: John 19:34, 37 (30 AD).

Jesus buried in a rich man's tomb: Isaiah 53:9 (c. 712 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 27:57–60 (30 AD).

Jesus' resurrection: Psalm 16:10 (c. 980 BC); Matthew 16:21 (29 AD); Luke 18:31–33 (30 AD). Fulfilled: Matthew 28:1–10; Luke 24:1–7; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8 (30 AD).

Jesus' ascension: Psalm 68:18 (c. 980 BC). Fulfilled: Luke 24:50–51; Acts 1:9 (30 AD).

Other fulfilled prophecies

Sarah conceives and bears Isaac in her old age:

Genesis 17:15–19; 18:10, 14 (c. 1898 BC). Fulfilled: Genesis 21:1–3 (c. 1897 BC).

Abraham to become the father of nations: Genesis 22:15–18 (c. 1872 BC). Fulfilled: Abraham's son, Isaac, became the forefather of the Jews; and Abraham's son, Ishmael, became the forefather of the Arabs.

Joseph correctly interprets Pharaoh's butler's and baker's dreams: Genesis 40:1–19 (c. 1720 BC).

Fulfilled: Genesis 40:20–22 (three days later).

Joseph correctly interprets Pharaoh's dream of the cows and the heads of grain: Genesis 41:25–32 (1715 BC). Fulfilled: Genesis 41:53–54 (1715–1701 BC).

Joseph reigns over his parents and brothers: Genesis 37:5–10 (c. 1729 BC). Fulfilled: Genesis 45 (1707 BC).

The division of the previously united twelve tribes of Israel into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah: 1 Kings 11:30–37 (c. 992 BC). Fulfilled: 1 Kings 12:20 (975 BC).

Curse upon the man who rebuilt the walls of Jericho: Joshua 6:26 (c. 1451 BC). Fulfilled: 1 Kings 16:34 (c. 930 BC).

Drought: 1 Kings 17:1 (c. 910 BC). Fulfilled: 1 Kings 17:7 (c. 910 BC).

Miraculous supply for Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in famine: 1 Kings 17:9–14 (c. 910 BC). Fulfilled: 1 Kings 17:15–16 (c. 910 BC).

End of drought: 1 Kings 18:1 (c. 906 BC). Fulfilled: 1 Kings 18:43–45 (c. 906 BC).

Destruction of Ben-hadad's army: 1 Kings 20:13–14 (901 BC). Fulfilled: 1 Kings 20:15–30 (901 BC).

Death of the man who refused to strike a prophet: 1 Kings 20:35–36 (901 BC). Fulfilled: 1 Kings 20:36 (901 BC).

King Ahab's death: 1 Kings 20:42 (899 BC); 21:18–24 (901 BC). Fulfilled: 1 Kings 22:31–38 (897 BC).

Transporting of Elijah to the heavens: 2 Kings 2:3–10 (896 BC). Fulfilled: 2 Kings 2:11 (896 BC).

End of the famine in Samaria: 2 Kings 7:1–2 (c. 892 BC). Fulfilled: 2 Kings 7:3–18 (c. 892 BC).

Hazael to become cruel king of Syria: 2 Kings 8:7–13 (c. 891 BC). Fulfilled: 2 Kings 8:14–15, 28–29; 10:32; 13:3 (c. 891 BC).

Queen Jezebel's death: 1 Kings 21:23 (899 BC); 2 Kings 9:10 (884 BC). Fulfilled: 2 Kings 9:30–37 (884 BC).

Four generations of King Jehu's descendants to sit upon the throne of Israel: 2 Kings 10:30 (884 BC). Fulfilled: 2 Kings 15:12 (c. 810 BC).

Destruction of Sennacherib's army, and his death: 2 Kings 19:6–7, 20–28, 32–34 (c. 710 BC). Fulfilled: 2 Kings 19:35–37 (c. 710 BC).

Birth and zeal of King Josiah: 1 Kings 13:2 (975 BC). Fulfilled: 2 Kings 22:1–2; 23:15–25 (641 BC).

Death of the false prophet Hananiah within one year: Jeremiah 28:10–16 (c. 596 BC). Fulfilled: Jeremiah 28:17 (c. 596 BC).

Invasion of the southern kingdom (Judah) by the Chaldeans (Babylonians): Habakkuk 1:6–11 (c. 626 BC). Fulfilled: 2 Kings 25:1 (590 BC).

The destruction of Jerusalem, and captivity of the Jews and King Zedekiah by the Babylonians: Jeremiah 25:11 (c. 606 BC); 32:3–5 (c. 590 BC); 34:2 (c. 591 BC). Fulfilled: 2 Kings 25:2–11; 2 Chronicles 36:11–21 (586 BC).

Abasement, conversion, and restoration of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon: Daniel 4:20–27 (c. 570 BC). Fulfilled: Daniel 4:28–37 (c. 569 BC).

Succession of world empires after Babylon: Daniel 2:31–40 (603 BC); 7:1–7, 17 (c. 555 BC); 8:1–8 (c. 553 BC). Fulfilled: Medo-Persia (538 BC–333 BC) was the silver breast and arms of the image in chapter 2, the bear of chapter 7, and the ram of chapter 8; Greece (333 BC–146 BC) was the brass belly and thighs of the image of Daniel 2, the winged leopard with four heads of chapter 7, and the he-goat of chapter 8; Rome (44 BC–455 BC) was the iron legs of the image of Daniel 2, and the iron-toothed beast of chapter 7.

King Cyrus of Persia, predicted by name, gives the captive Jews permission to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple: Isaiah 44:28; 45:1–4 (c. 712 BC). Fulfilled: Cyrus the Great reigned from 559–530 BC. (See also 2 Chronicles 36:22–23 and Ezra 1:1–4.)

Return of the Jews after 70 years of captivity in Babylon: Jeremiah 25:12 (c. 606 BC); 29:10, 14 (c. 599 BC); 33:7 (c. 590 BC); Zechariah 1:16–17; 8:9 (c. 519 BC). Fulfilled, as signified by the dedication of the rebuilt Temple: Ezra 6:14–16 (516 BC). (See also Ezra chapters 1, 7–8.)

Rebuilding of walls and streets of Jerusalem:
Daniel 9:25 (c. 538 BC). Fulfilled: Nehemiah 6:15; 7:1 (445 BC).

Destruction of Tyre, capital of Phoenicia and world trading capital, in two stages: Ezekiel 26:3–21 (588 BC). Fulfilled: The first stage was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, besieged the mainland city of Tyre for 13 years and destroyed it (585–572 BC). Nebuchadnezzar, however, had no navy, so he could not flatten the island city. The second stage was fulfilled when Alexander the Great captured the island city of Tyre by building a causeway from the mainland to the island, using cedars from the mountains of Lebanon for piles and the debris of the ruined mainland city for fill (332 BC).

Barren Elizabeth conceives and bears John the Baptist: Luke 1:13 (5 BC). Fulfilled: Luke 1:24, 57–64 (4 BC).

Slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem: Jeremiah 31:15 (c. 606 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 2:16–18 (2 BC).

John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Messiah: Isaiah 40:3 (c. 712 BC); Isaiah 62:10–12 (c. 698 BC); Malachi 3:1; 4:5–6 (420 BC); Luke 1:17, 76–80 (4 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 3:3 (26 AD).

Conversion of the Gentiles: Isaiah 9:2 (c. 740 BC); Isaiah 49:6 (c. 712 BC). Fulfilled: Matthew 4:13–16 (26 AD); Acts 13:48 (46 AD).

Spiritual blindness of the Jewish religious leaders: Isaiah 6:9 (c. 758 BC); Isaiah 29:13 (c. 712 BC). Fulfilled: Mark 7:6–7 (28 AD); Acts 28:25–27 (62 AD).

Betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot: Psalm 41:9 (c. 980 BC). Fulfilled: John 13:18; 18:1–5 (30 AD).

Amount and outcome of Judas' "reward" for betraying Jesus: Zechariah 11:12–13 (c. 487 BC). Fulfillment: Matthew 26:14–15; 27:3–10; Acts 1:18–19 (30 AD).

Peter's denial of Jesus: Matthew 26:34 (30 AD). Fulfilled: Matthew 26:69–75 (30 AD).

Judas' office taken by another: Psalm 109:7–8 (c. 980 BC). Fulfilled: Acts 1:17, 20 (30 AD).

Outpouring of the Holy Spirit: Joel 2:28–29 (c. 800 BC); Acts 1:4–5 (30 AD). Fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost: Acts 2:1–4, 16–18 (30 AD).

Shipwreck on Paul's voyage to Rome, with no loss of life: Acts 27:9–10, 21–26, 34 (61 AD). Fulfilled: Acts 27:41–44 (61 AD). (See also 2 Corinthians 11:25.)

Destruction of Jerusalem after Jesus' coming: Daniel 9:26 (c. 538 BC); Matthew 24:1–2; Luke 19:42–44 (30 AD). Fulfilled: Forty years after Jesus' death, the Roman legions of the Emperor Vespasian, under his son, General Titus, marched on Jerusalem, burnt it to the ground, and took the ruins of the temple apart stone by stone to retrieve the gold from gilding and furnishings which had melted and run into the cracks (70 AD).

The Gospel to be preached and Christianity to spread worldwide: Matthew 24:14; Acts 1:8 (30 AD). Fulfilled: There are currently about 2 billion members of Christian denominations spread throughout every country of the world. (See also Mark 16:20; Acts 8:1; 17:6.)

Which are you?

Jesus told this parable:

“A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.” When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Then His disciples asked Him, saying, “What does this parable mean?”

And He said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the Devil comes and takes away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the Word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.”

—*Luke 8:5–15*

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