

## **BURN THE SHIPS: Day One**

**Main Point:** We all have a standard that guides us in life.

**Scripture:** Acts 19:11-20

We all have a standard in our life that influences the way we see the world and how we interact with the people around us. Often, it is referred to as a “Moral Compass” that directs the decisions we make and the way we treat other people. For some, this standard is life experience or the “School of Hard Knocks.” For others, it is the words of wisdom/sayings of a dear loved one. Maybe you get your “cues” from culture when it comes to determining what is “right/wrong” or “wise/foolish.”

Let’s look at a passage of Scripture where Paul confronts this same mentality.

### **Read Acts 19:11-20.**

Context is important to understand the significance of this passage of Scripture. While on one of his missionary trips, Paul goes through Ephesus, a major trading port city of the ancient world known for its idol worship (many gods), sexual promiscuity, and witchcraft practices.

While working his way through the city, an incident occurs where a man was attempting to cast a demon out of a man, only to have the demon-possessed man beat him up. Word got around about the incident, and it caused fear and panic to stir among the people of Ephesus. It also allowed opportunities for Paul to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others.

As we read in verses 19-20, many people responded to the call to follow Jesus. Notice specifically what is mentioned in this passage. It says that many who were practicing witchcraft brought their books and scrolls and burned them. Notice also that the author includes the total value of the books that were burned. This was included to show how valuable these books were to the people. Up until that point, that group of people was taking their cues from those books and the acts of witchcraft. After hearing the Gospel, they were motivated to action and denounced the same books they used to have as their standard for life. Why would they do that?

Because whatever drives you to action becomes your standard in life. Not only did they act and burn those books; but they also took action by asking questions about Jesus.

Like the Ephesians, we too have things in our lives that compete with the Bible as our standard in life. We must make the choice to identify what those things are, and essentially “burn” them.

***Take some time today and reflect on what you have just read and answer the following:***

1. What is one major takeaway you got from this passage?
2. What is something that competes with God’s Word as your standard in life at times?

## **BURN THE SHIPS: Day Two**

**Main Point:** God wants to talk to you!

**Scripture:** Hebrews 1:1-2 // Ephesians 1:8-10

It is very easy for us to take the Word of God for granted. Today, it takes almost no time at all to download a bible app or purchase a bible at your local bookstore. We know it is the “good Christian” thing to do, yet many of us struggle to get into it consistently.

The Bible is so much more than a religious book we read to be “good” with God. The Bible is a collection of writings in which God chose to reveal Himself to humanity. This is important because the pagan religions of the ancient world (many of which are still around today) that the gods did not desire to be involved in the affairs of humanity. Acts of worship and sacrifice were simply meant to keep the gods happy to avoid famine, sickness, or other judgment.

The God of the Bible is different.

### **Read Hebrews 1:1-2.**

Notice what the author is saying in these two verses. *Throughout time, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to...* He is reminding his readers that the God they have placed their faith in chooses to speak to them. He is relational with humanity. He goes on to say that even now (during the time it was written), God still chose to speak to them through his Son, Jesus. Not only did God speak to humanity; He came down and pursued them through the Incarnation.

God chose to reveal Himself to humanity. He chose to be intimately involved in the affairs of His creation. The message of the Bible is not an instruction booklet on things to do to keep God happy, so you don't go to Hell. It is an invitation to join the conversation the God of all Creation started with humanity!

### **Read Ephesians 1:8-10.**

In this passage, Paul is in the middle of opening a letter to the churches in Ephesus with praise to God. As you read down through verses 8-10, you see that the plan to reconcile this broken world back to Himself was something God chose to reveal to us.

God wanting to be relational with humanity is part of what makes him holy (different, set apart, comparable to none). And he wants to talk to you...and he does that through the reading of His Word!

***Take some time today and reflect on what you have just read and answer the following:***

1. Why do you think people struggle with reading the Bible?
2. How does knowing God wants to talk to you change how you feel about His Word?

## **BURN THE SHIPS: Day Three**

**Main Point:** God's Word renews our minds.

**Scripture:** Romans 12:1-2 // Ephesians 2:1-3 // Philippians 2:1-11

Recent research suggests that an average human spends over three hours a day on their phone. The Digital Age has provided infinite amounts of information at our fingertips, and we spend a great amount of time consuming it. We get caught up in chasing after the "LIKES" on social media. We allow ourselves to get sucked into countless debates and arguments over current social and political situations. We follow our favorite athletes and celebrities. Without knowing it, we have stuffed our minds with all kinds of "stuff" that does nothing for our spiritual growth. Without even noticing it, we have adopted the mindset of the culture in different areas of our lives by what we consume and engage in.

### **Read Romans 12:1-2.**

In this passage, the apostle Paul is encouraging the believers in Rome to offer themselves as living sacrifices to God. In verse 2, he says that the way to be a "living sacrifice" is to reject the patterns/habits/mindsets/ideologies of the world and to be transformed (made different, restored) by the "...*renewal of your minds.*"

What exactly is the mindset of the world, and why should we reject it?

### **Read Ephesians 2:1-3.**

The "default" mindset that we are all born into is one that makes us (the individual) the standard. It is a mindset that says our personal happiness is the goal of life. It encourages us to determine what truth is to us, while simultaneously justifying the degradation of anyone who chooses to disagree with us. It is a mindset that tells us to put our needs before those of others.

The Bible says that the only remedy is to reject this mindset and instead adopt the mindset of Jesus.

### **Read Philippians 2:1-11.**

The mindset of Jesus is one of humility. It is one that sees people as God sees them. It sees the needs of others as more important than our own. It is a mindset driven by service. Only when we begin to adopt this mindset will we see the transformation Paul speaks of in Romans 12:1-2. Choosing to follow Jesus is essentially choosing to adopt His mindset and rejecting that of the world. "Renewing your mind" begins with adopting the mindset of Jesus. (Which is a process!)

***Take some time today and reflect on what you have just read and answer the following:***

1. How would you describe the mindset of this world? The mindset of Jesus?
2. What is something you can do starting today to "renew" your mind?

## **BURN THE SHIPS:**

### **Day Four**

**Main Point:** God's Word gives us stability.

**Scripture:** Psalm 1 // Matthew 7:24-27

I remember one of the houses my wife and I lived in had a massive maple tree in the backyard. I remember often looking up at that thing and just marveling at its size. I also recall watching this monster of a tree hold its own against strong winds that threatened to break the will of smaller trees in our neighborhood. Despite best efforts, the tree continued to stand strong.

What could make such a tree stand the test of the elements?

This tree had amazing roots that ran deep into the soil, providing all the nutrients needed to keep it healthy. The roots of this tree are also scattered throughout the yard, providing stability for the tree. The Bible uses a similar illustration in Psalm 1.

#### **Read Psalm 1.**

Notice what the psalmist is saying here. First off, he is saying that there is a benefit to finding delight in the law of the LORD (Word of God). The psalmist is saying that those who find delight in the Word of God are likened to a tree planted by a stream. Essentially, the psalmist is saying here that those who delight in the Word of God are given all they need to lead a godly life.

It is important to note here that simply reading God's Word is not what it means to delight in it. To delight in God's Word is to read and want to respond to what it says in obedience. It is a choice we must make. Notice what Jesus has to say about this.

#### **Read Matthew 7:24-27.**

In this parable, Jesus is saying that those who choose to stand on the words he spoke are like a house planted on the rock that can withstand the storms of life. But to the one who hears the words, but chooses not to respond to them in obedience, they are like building their house on sand. The moment a little trouble comes, it will wash it away and collapse.

The Word of God gives us the stability to withstand the winds and storms of life. When we delight in God's Word, we are firmly planted. We are never promised a life void of troubles, hurts, or setbacks. But we are promised that, if we choose to delight and walk out the truths of God's Word, we can experience the strength and stability to stand strong in the face of troubles. We must do more than delight in what we read. We must choose to ask the Holy Spirit to show us how to accurately apply and obey what is being said. The promise of stability is only given if we choose to apply and obey what we are reading.

**Take some time today and reflect on what you have just read and answer the following:**

1. What was the last thing you read in the Bible that got you excited to apply it to your life?
2. What do you think it means to “delight” in the Word of God?

## **BURN THE SHIPS: Day Five**

**Main Point:** God’s Word provides direction.

**Scripture:** Proverbs 14:12 // Psalm 119:105 // John 14:1-7 // Acts 4:12

Have you ever gotten lost? When I was first learning to drive, I remember using landmarks to help me find where I was going. Even though I was encouraged to follow street signs for direction, I insisted on using my own method, because it always worked...until it didn’t. All it took was getting lost once or twice to make me realize that I needed to rely on something other than my own understanding of navigation to get me where I was wanting to go.

### **Read Proverbs 14:12.**

We all have areas in our lives where we tend to lean on our own understanding to get us where we want to go in life. If you are like me, I have had too many instances where I would go my own way, and then reach out to God when I felt lost. What this verse is implying here is that there is a different way; a different source we can use for direction.

### **Read Psalm 119:105.**

The psalmist here is saying that God’s Word is a ...”*lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*” To continue with the driving illustration, God’s Word is our headlights and GPS. Not only does God’s Word give us vision as we walk through life, but it provides direction on where we are ultimately heading.

So, where are we, as followers of Jesus, actually going? Jesus’s first disciples actually asked Jesus this very question.

### **Read John 14:1-7.**

What does Jesus say in this passage? He is telling them that following their own ways will get them nowhere, but choosing to follow Him [Jesus] will lead them to the Father. It will lead to forgiveness, and freedom, and peace, and ultimately a restored relationship with the God of all creation. And this passage is about more than personal implications. Jesus is making the statement that He alone is the way to the Father. Jesus is the only name given under heaven given to men by which they must be saved. (Acts 4:12).

God's Word provides direction in our lives. Ultimately, the Word of God points us to Jesus, and Jesus said if we follow him, it will lead us to a life giving relationship with the Father. Ironically, Jesus is referred to as the "Word" of God (John 1:1). So when we follow the Word of God, we are choosing to follow Jesus.

***Take some time today and reflect on what you have just read and answer the following:***

1. Have you ever been lost before? How did you feel and how did you find your way back?
2. Recall a time when you relied on the Word of God to direct your steps.
3. In your own words, describe what Jesus is saying in John 14:1-7.

## **BURN THE SHIPS:**

### **Day Six**

**Main Point:** God's Word provides correction.

**Scripture:** James 1:23-24 // 2 Timothy 3:16-17

There are generally two types of people in this world: Those who love standing in front of a mirror, and those who try to avoid mirrors as much as possible.

Sometimes we overlook just how important mirrors are in our lives. Mirrors on our vehicles provide a better visual of our surroundings when we drive. Mirrors help dancers and body builders work on their form. Mirrors can also help us get a better look at spots that don't feel or look right on our body. We may not always like what we see, but a mirror will show us regardless.

**Read James 1:22-24.**

The Word of God is like a mirror in our lives. What do mirrors do? They help us with the blind spots in our lives. The Word of God helps us with spiritual blind spots. It brings light to the areas that we need to grow; areas that we need to be corrected in. In this passage, James is telling his readers that the purpose of the Word of God is to show you those areas where you and I have not yet adopted the mindset of Jesus. But he goes on to say that seeing those areas and doing nothing about it is like looking at a mirror, only to ignore what you see completely.

The Word of God shows us these areas, but why? What purpose does it serve?

**Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.**

Notice what Paul is saying here. He is saying that all of Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable (useful) for teaching and correction. But what is the goal of God providing correction through His Word? Look at verse 17. The purpose is for you and I, as Christ followers, to have what we need to grow in righteousness and be equipped for the work He has created us for.

Correction is ultimately for our growth. As a mirror, the Word of God shows us our current reality, and allows us this visual so we can correct it. Mirrors show us we need to cut the wheel to the right or left more to get in our parking spot. If the mirror shows us that our form is off, we respond by switching it up for optimal results. Or if the mirror is showing you that you have spinach in your teeth, take the time and use the mirror to help you get it out of there!

Likewise, let the Word of God serve as the mirror in your life... Allow it to show you where you need to correct something, and allow the Holy Spirit to work that out in your life.

**Take some time today and reflect on what you have just read and answer the following:**

1. When it comes to correction, how well do you typically respond to it?
2. Has there been an instance when the Word of God showed you something and you didn't like it? How did you respond?

## **BURN THE SHIPS: Day Seven**

**Main Point:** God's Word provides protection.

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:9-11 // Galatians 5:16-22 // James 1:15

Whenever we go to visit my parents, we love to watch our dogs run wild in their backyard. My parents put up a fence in their backyard so their dogs would have the freedom to run around safely. The dogs knew that as long as they stayed within the parameters of the fence, they would be safe from harm. If they stepped outside those parameters, there was potential danger for them. Like a fence, the Word of God protects us from potential danger. God's intention in His Word is not to rob us of a joyful, even pleasure-filled life. Instead, He wants to provide a safe parameter for us to enjoy our lives in such a way we do not have to worry about danger.

**Read Psalm 11:9-11.**

Notice the question the psalmist asks here: "***How can a person keep their ways pure?***" He then goes on to answer his own question with, "***...by guarding it [their life] according to your word.***" (v.9) He continues by saying that his mode of protection from sinning against God was by keeping the Word of God in his heart. In those areas where it seems like God is trying to take something from us, He is protecting us from something that could harm us. Any time we see God forbidding something, it is never to rob us of joy or pleasure. He is protecting us from danger.

**Read Galatians 5:16-22.**

When you read through this passage, maybe you are wondering, "*does God just want to take away all my fun?!*" Of course not...Paul is saying that all of these are acts that ultimately harm us or others. They are all acts that are driven by our sinful desires, and sin never leads to life.

Sin always leads to death. It always leads to guilt, and shame, and pain, and ultimately death. James, the pastor of the first church and half-brother of Jesus, adds to this thought when he says that sin always leads to death. (James 1:15). Anytime we step outside of the parameters of God's Word, we invite death into our lives. It can be pain, shame, guilt, or literal death.

God wants you and me to enjoy our lives. He wants us to experience joy and freedom, and safety. When He tells us to avoid certain things, He does so with the heart of a Father who is just looking out for His children whom He loves dearly.

***Take some time today and reflect on what you have just read and answer the following:***

1. Have you ever thought the Bible was just a list of dos and don'ts with no real purpose?
2. What is one area you are tempted to step outside the parameters of God's Word? Why?