

DEVELOPING A LIFE-ALTERING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORD OF GOD

THE BIBLE YOU OWN MUST BECOME THE WORD YOU LIVE

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Most believers are spiritually starving while a twelve-course feast sits on their nightstand.

We have access to more biblical information than any generation before us, yet access has not always produced understanding.

We have Bible apps, podcasts, commentaries, conferences, and countless translations.

But we have confused access to the Word with a relationship with the Word.

We know how to search for a scripture that supports our feelings, but we do not always know how to submit our feelings to Scripture.

THE PROBLEM IS NOT ALWAYS THAT WE DON'T HAVE A BIBLE. THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE BIBLE DOESN'T HAVE OUR ATTENTION.

The Bible is not merely a book we consult during emergencies. It is God's written revelation, given to form our character, direct our decisions, and develop our understanding of Him.

WE BELIEVE SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED BY GOD.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17 KJV

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,

for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Scripture teaches us what is right.
It confronts what is wrong.
It shows us how to get right.
And it trains us to remain on the right path.

QUOTE: "The Holy Scriptures are our letters from home" — Augustine

We should never become so accustomed to owning a Bible that we lose our appreciation for receiving God's revelation.

YOU CANNOT DEVELOP A DEEP RELATIONSHIP WITH A GOD WHOSE REVELATION YOU CONSISTENTLY NEGLECT.

Jesus described the Word as essential nourishment.

MATTHEW 4:4 KJV

But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

We treat the Bible like emergency medicine. But Jesus describes dependence upon God's Word as essential to life.

1. UNYIELDING PROXIMITY TO THE TEXT

YOU CANNOT DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH A WORD

YOU NEVER ENCOUNTER.

A relationship requires proximity. You must intentionally engage Scripture regularly. One of the great spiritual weaknesses of our generation is dependence upon secondhand biblical understanding.

But a personal relationship with God cannot be maintained exclusively through someone else's spiritual discipline.

Imagine trying to maintain a marriage in which every conversation with your spouse had to pass through another person.

Eventually, intimacy would suffer. Not necessarily because love had disappeared. But because personal communication had disappeared.

YOU CANNOT SUBSTITUTE SOMEONE ELSE'S SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE FOR YOUR OWN.

HEBREWS 4:12 KJV

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

QUOTE: "When you consistently expose yourself to the Word, you eventually discover that the Word is exposing you." — RC Blakes

JAMES 1:23–25 KJV

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Notice the word continueth. Transformation requires sustained exposure. A mirror cannot help you correct what you refuse to examine.

PSALM 119:105 KJV

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

God's Word may not reveal the entire journey. But it gives enough light for the next step.

YOU CANNOT BUILD A STRONG SPIRITUAL LIFE ON OCCASIONAL BIBLICAL EXPOSURE.

2. DEPENDENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ILLUMINATION

THE SAME SPIRIT WHO INSPIRED SCRIPTURE HELPS US UNDERSTAND ITS TRUTH.

The second necessity is illumination. The Holy Spirit helps us understand and respond to what God has revealed. But He does not give us permission to make Scripture say whatever we want it to say.

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ILLUMINATION AND IMAGINATION.

We must learn the difference between understanding God's Word and projecting our preferences onto God's Word.

JOHN 14:26 KJV

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in

my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Jesus originally gave this promise to His disciples concerning the Spirit's ministry in their remembrance of His teaching.

Believers today likewise depend upon the Holy Spirit to understand and receive God's truth.

But spiritual illumination does not eliminate careful study.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 KJV

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

We must understand context. Who is speaking? Who is being addressed? What is happening? What did the passage mean in its original setting?

Because Scripture taken out of context can become a justification for error.

QUOTE: "For Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit." — John Calvin

Scripture is the school. The Holy Spirit is our teacher. And every believer must be willing to remain a student. Some people want the benefits of graduation without the discipline of instruction. They want maturity without study. Discernment without doctrine. Wisdom without correction. But you cannot become spiritually mature while refusing to be taught.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:12 KJV

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

The Holy Spirit opens our understanding. Sometimes that illumination is

uncomfortable. Because He confronts our pride. He challenges our bitterness. He exposes our unforgiveness. And He reveals areas where we have resisted obedience.

QUOTE: "The purpose of biblical illumination is not merely to help you see something new in the text. It is to help you see what God requires of you through the text." — RC Blakes

SPIRITUAL MATURITY REQUIRES BOTH THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT AND THE DISCIPLINE OF STUDY.

3. THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE APPLICATION

THE WORD YOU KNOW MUST BECOME THE LIFE YOU LIVE.

Knowing Scripture is not the same as obeying Scripture. Some people know what the Bible says about forgiveness. But refuse to forgive. They know what it says about generosity. But refuse to give. They know what it says about humility. But cannot receive correction. They know what it says about love. But their closest relationships are filled with hostility.

BIBLICAL INFORMATION IS NOT THE SAME AS SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION.

JAMES 1:22 KJV

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Notice the warning. James says hearing without doing produces self-deception. You can convince yourself that you are spiritually mature simply because you are biblically informed.

QUOTE: "The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation." — Traditionally attributed to D. L. Moody

Information can make you knowledgeable. But obedience is where biblical knowledge begins to produce visible transformation. The purpose of Scripture is not to make us religiously impressive. It is to make us increasingly Christlike.

LUKE 6:46–49 KJV

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Both builders experienced a storm. The difference was not the storm. The difference was the foundation. And Jesus identified that foundation as hearing His words and doing them.

THE GREATEST EVIDENCE THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE WORD IS THAT YOU ARE WILLING TO LIVE THE WORD.

After every Bible reading, ask:

WHAT MUST CHANGE IN MY LIFE BECAUSE OF WHAT I JUST READ?

Not merely, "What did I learn?" But, "What must I change?"

THE BIBLE HAS NOT COMPLETED ITS WORK IN YOU UNTIL ITS TRUTH BEGINS TO SHAPE YOUR CONDUCT.

4. ALLOWING SCRIPTURE TO GOVERN OUR LANGUAGE

YOUR WORDS SHOULD REFLECT THE WORD THAT IS SHAPING YOUR HEART.

One of the clearest indications of what influences our hearts is what consistently comes out of our mouths.

Listen to someone's conversation long enough, and you begin to discover what shapes their thinking.

Some people have developed an entire vocabulary of defeat.

They speak negatively about themselves.

They speak destructively about their families.

They constantly rehearse their fears.

They use their words to magnify their problems rather than acknowledge the faithfulness of God.

Scripture does not teach that every spoken sentence automatically creates a spiritual reality. But it does teach that our words carry serious moral and relational consequences.

PROVERBS 18:21 KJV

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Our words can wound.

Our words can heal.

They can encourage.

They can destroy confidence.

They can deepen conflict.

Or create opportunities for reconciliation.

LUKE 6:45 KJV

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Jesus connects the mouth to the heart.

Sometimes the problem is not merely the words we are speaking. Sometimes the problem is what we have allowed to dominate our thinking.

THE WORD OF GOD SHOULD NOT SIMPLY CHANGE WHAT WE SAY IN CHURCH. IT SHOULD CHANGE HOW WE SPEAK EVERYWHERE.

COLOSSIANS 3:16 KJV

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Notice the word dwell. Paul does not say to let the Word occasionally visit. He says to let it dwell.

Because when Scripture fills the heart, it begins to shape our speech.

EPHESIANS 4:29 KJV

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Before speaking, ask:

Is this true?

Is this necessary?

Does it build up?

Does it reflect the character of Christ?

Does it minister grace?

Identify one area where your language needs to change.

Your marriage.

Your children.

Your finances.

Your personal identity.

Your response to disappointment.

Find a biblical passage that addresses that area.

Meditate upon its meaning.

And deliberately bring your speech into agreement with its teaching.

A LIFE GOVERNED BY THE WORD WILL PRODUCE WORDS THAT GIVE LIFE.

A Bible displayed in your home cannot establish the foundation of a life that never submits to its teaching.

THE GOAL IS NOT SIMPLY TO GET THE BIBLE BACK INTO OUR HANDS.

THE GOAL IS TO GET THE WORD OF GOD BACK INTO THE CENTER OF OUR LIVES.