

How to Be Spiritually Strong Series

The Weapon of the Word of God (Eph. 6:17)

By
Andy Davis

At A Glance:

- I. Introduction
- II. Understanding the Word of God
- III. The Weapon of the Word of God
- IV. How to Take the Word of God
- V. Conclusion
- VI. Questions for Further Thought

These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.

The Weapon of the Word of God

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Full of Excuses

1. If you are anything like I used to be, you will probably say that the Bible, the Word of God, is very important to you. Anyone who has been around the church for any length of time will quickly pick up on the importance and centrality of the Bible. Every single week, the Bible is emphasized and taught from.
2. However, at the same time, as I said the Bible was important to me, I hardly ever spent time with it. My devotion to the importance of the Word of God was only surface deep. I'm probably not alone in this. In a recent study, numbers showed that only 4 in 10 Americans read the Bible at least three times a year on their own. 40% of Americans never read the Bible on their own, with another 20% reading it no more than 1-2 times per year. Only 10% of Americans claim to read their Bible every day.¹ At the same time, 45% of Americans think our country would be worse off without the Bible.
3. My list of excuses to justify the difference between how I claimed to value the Bible compared to how I treated it was long. I thought it was boring, it didn't offer me anything that was relevant to my life, I wasn't a reader, I tried reading it but didn't get much out of it, I don't have time, and the list went on. I don't think I'm the only one that has a long list of justifications for my lack of spending time with the Word of God. Some of them were legitimate, others were not.
4. Over the years I have come to understand that no matter what reason we offer for not spending time in the Word of God, we are only hurting ourselves when we neglect God's Word. To be frank, no reason is good enough. The less time we spend in the Bible and the less we know about it, the worse off we will be. We will be missing out on the wonderful gifts God gives to those who believe in Jesus and our internal quality of life will suffer. Reading the Bible won't change our circumstances, but it will change our response and attitude toward our circumstances in a positive way. The more Scripture we know, understand, and live out the more joy, peace, comfort, patience, hope, etc. we will have in our hearts. Cutting ourselves off from the source of all these positive qualities we long for isn't a wise thing to do.
5. If we are to reach the point where we are motivated enough to regularly spend time with the Word of God and put in the work to learn how to understand it, we must first develop the conviction that the Bible is good for us and brings worthwhile benefits to our lives. If we aren't convinced of this, we will continue to neglect the Word of God and live without spiritual strength. We will end up pursuing the very qualities the Bible could provide us in places that will only disappoint us.

¹ (2) The (Sad) State of Theology Today - YouTube, [State_of_the_bible-2022.pdf \(americanbible.org\)](#)

- B. The primary tool God has given humanity for their good is the Bible. God intentionally took thousands of years to deliver this wonderful gift that causes human flourishing. Through a knowledge of the Bible, in connection with Jesus, we can discover the best way to live for our own personal benefit. The more we live in harmony with the way God designed the world to work, the better off we will be. The depth of our happiness and joy is connected to the extent to which we understand and live out God's Word.
- C. The problem we encounter is that we do not naturally have a desire or capacity to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14). If left to us, we will never want to pursue or come to understand the message of the Bible. We will not value it for the treasure it is. Unless God intervenes into our lives and changes our hearts, we will not develop a love for and delight in the Bible.
- D. While it isn't as easy as it may appear, there is still great benefit attached to knowing the Bible. The sixth piece of spiritual armor that gives us the strength we need to stand up in the most difficult seasons of life, according to Ephesians 6:17, is the Word of God.

II. Understanding the Word of God

- A. So far in this series, we have seen that disciples are commanded to be continually strengthened by God through the Holy Spirit. By pursuing certain spiritual resources provided by God, our souls develop capacities that allow us to live spiritually strong lives. A knowledge of the truth and living according to what is true was the first piece of armor listed by the apostle Paul. Next came righteousness. A person who lives by God's moral standards, as much as is possible in this broken world, will develop strength to stand firm against our enemies. Further, understanding and applying the gospel truths to our lives will result in a deep-seated internal sense of peace. This peace brings strength to our lives. Further, a firm personal conviction that God is reliable and that He can be trusted, including every word spoken by Jesus, will bring about a divine strength that goes beyond anything we could produce on our own. The stronger our trust becomes, the stronger our soul will be. The last piece of armor we examined was the positive results that happen for those who live fully assured of their salvation. They accept the fact that there will be a time in the future in which they will enjoy all the blessings provided them by Jesus. Each of these elements, when pursued consistently over time, will result in a person becoming spiritually strong.
- B. The sixth and final piece of spiritual armor is the Word of God: ¹⁷ "And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph. 6:17). The imagery is of a Roman sword (short, small dagger) which is defined as "the word of God." For Paul, the Word of God is the message communicated by God, whether written (2 Tim. 3:16, 1 Cor. 14:37) or verbal (Rm. 10:8, 10:17, 2 Cor. 2:17, Col. 1:25, Ac. 4:31, Heb. 13:7). The Word of God includes the teachings of Jesus (Rm. 16:25, Lk. 5:1, 8:11).
- C. Before we can discuss how the Word of God functions as a spiritual weapon and its source of strength, we must first understand what the Word of God is. The Bible is either a book by humans about God or a book from God to humanity. The Bible could be a collection of writings in which people are sharing their ideas about God. In this case, the Bible would be like every other book ever written—it comes from human authors written to other people. While the Bible is written by human authors, we must acknowledge that the Bible claims to be more than

a book written exclusively by human authors. While it is written, in part, by human authors, it also claims to be the Word of God. Taking the Bible for what it claims for itself means that those who think the Bible is only a human book must hold to the idea that Bible is wrong about itself. If the Bible claims to come from God but doesn't, the Bible is wrong. Those who think the Bible is merely a human book, out of necessity, must also admit that the Bible makes false claims about itself because it claims to be the Word of God.

- D. For most people, they become convinced that the Bible is the Word of God when they come into contact with it.² We will look at what the Biblical authors mean when they say their writings are the Word of God. To say that the Bible is the Word of God is to say that God spoke through human authors. The writings of the Bible did not come down directly and fully formed out of heaven. Rather, human authors wrote the Word of God over time. Here is how Peter put it:

²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Pet. 1:20-21)

- E. The nature of the Bible is that "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (v. 21). Human beings did not initiate it ("no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will" v. 21). Rather, the reason some godly individuals wrote on God's behalf was because God told them to. In some cases, recording God's Word was even commanded by God. The written word of God started when Moses was commanded to write down the words of God (Ex. 24:4, 17:14, 34:27, Dt. 31:9). According to the Bible, the human authors didn't just decide to write or speak their ideas and say it came from God. Their words *came* from God, which is why they were written down.³ Others were given a message from God and told to share it with others. In every case, the communication of Scripture was initiated by God in one form or another. Since God is the ultimate source and author, He is the One who determines what He was trying to say. The proper interpretation of the Bible is the one that God intended to communicate, and we should work hard at not twisting the Words of God.
- F. The purpose of God writing His word through human authors was for our benefit. God knows that us having a knowledge of who He is and allowing our lives to be shaped by that knowledge is good for us (Rm. 15:4, 1 Cor. 10:11, Jn. 10:10). God gave us His Word so that our lives could be transformed for the better. The purpose of God's Word is summarized by the same author of Ephesians this way:

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

- G. All the writings of God are breathed out by God. Since Scripture is the Word of God, it is effective in producing certain results in people's lives. God's Word instructs us in the knowledge

² While fascinating reasons can be offered to support the notion the Bible is the Word of God, these reasons aren't why most people accept the Bible as the Word of God. Like the words of Jesus, people get exposed to the words of God, experience its self-authenticating quality, and accept it as God's Word.

³ 1 Thess. 2:13, John 10:35

and skills we need to live a healthy life, “profitable for teaching” (v. 16). God’s Word shows us where we need to make life corrections, “for reproof” (v. 16). God points out our rebellion against Him and our flaws through His Word. God’s Word doesn’t just tell us where we are wrong, it also reveals how to correct what is wrong, “for correction” (v. 16). The Word of God shows us how to fix our lives and put them back together the way God wants them. God’s Word also transforms us to live upright moral lives before God, “for training in righteousness” (v. 16). The Word of God shapes our convictions (the way we think) and our character (our internal nature). Once the Bible is performing these four activities in a person’s life, they will be equipped to live like Jesus lived, “so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (v. 17). This is the main purpose of God’s Word.

- H. These benefits of the Word of God can only be experienced through Jesus. Every person needs to be rightly related to Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit He offers if the Word of God is to be properly understood and experienced. Only when a person is correctly connected to Jesus can he begin the wonderful journey of discovering the positive results of the Word of God:
- ¹⁵ But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; ¹⁶ but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:15-18)
- I. The reason Jesus is necessary to gain access to the benefits of God’s Word is because we will not accept or understand the spiritual message of God’s Word unless we are brought out of our natural condition that rejects it (1 Cor. 2:13-14). Without Jesus’s help, God’s Word will appear to be foolish to us (1 Cor. 1:18, 2 Cor. 4:3). Further, the more wonderful things in God’s Word will only be understood and appreciated by those who are spiritually mature (1 Cor. 2:6, Heb. 5:14).
- J. The Word of God provides many valuable benefits to our lives, but experiencing these benefits requires a connection with Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual maturity. Disciples must grow in their appreciation, knowledge, understanding, and obedience to the Bible if they want to experience more of its benefits. This will require study and development of specific skills that help us understand the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15, Ezra 7:10).
- K. What is your attitude and perspective on the Bible? Do you view a knowledge of the Bible as life (Mt. 4:4) and a delight (Ps. 1:2)? Does the Bible have something worthwhile to offer you? Disciples will develop a firm conviction that growth in an understanding of the Bible and living according to its truths and principles will make their lives better. The Word of God is a treasure through which we gain access to the life God offers us. The life God offers is the best, most satisfying kind of life that is available to us. God’s way of life is far superior and more satisfying than any other alternative. Informed and mature disciples will be convinced of this reality and pursue it passionately. They know any effort and time committed to the Word of God is not wasted and is the best investment they can make.

III. The Weapon of the Word of God

- A. As with the other pieces of spiritual armor, there are several ways the Word of God functions as a spiritual weapon. We will only cover some of these ways. First, the Word of God, when first understood and accepted as true, will free a person from the grasp of the enemy (1 Pet. 1:23). People are brought to spiritual life through the Word of God, which transfers them from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of Jesus (Col. 1:13). Because of the Word of God, people are freed from the enemy so they can live for God (2 Tim. 2:26)—the very thing they were created for.
- B. Second, the Bible informs our conscience which promotes a life of righteousness (Heb. 4:12). The Word of God helps us know and understand the difference between right and wrong. As limited human beings, we can be easily mistaken and confused morally. We tend to justify and rationalize our own actions. We can be deceived by not living the way God desires (Heb. 3:13). We can think something is good or right when in fact it is not (Pr. 14:12, 16:25). This is where the Bible helps us to see things as they really are when it comes to morality (the rightness or wrongness of something).
- C. Third, the Word of God sets the standard for our conduct (Lk. 11:28, Mt. 7:24-27, 15:6, Mk. 7:13). The Bible not only informs us about what is right or wrong, it also promotes accountability to that standard. Jesus taught and acted as if the Word of God ought to be the standard by which people live their lives. The moral standards of God determine the proper standard for our behavior. God’s moral standards guide the decisions and actions of disciples. Knowing what God approves and disapproves of is not enough; we must also abide by those standards. The Bible says to only worship God, so when Jesus was tempted to worship Satan, He refused to act according to the moral standards of God’s Word (Mt. 4:8-10). Jesus regularly and repeatedly acted as if the Word of God is the standard that should determine human conduct.
- D. Fourth, the Word of God works in those who believe, which causes life transformation (1 Thess. 2:13, Eph. 5:26, Jn. 17:17). The Word of God performs a particular work in the lives of those who trust it, including the endurance of suffering for Jesus as they follow His example. The Word of God provides power, conviction, transformation of life that imitates others who are following Jesus, joy in the Holy Spirit, and it spreads through those who believe it (1 Thess. 1:5-10).
- E. Fifth, the Bible causes us to grow spiritually by nourishing our souls (1 Pet. 2:2). As disciples are nourished by the Word of God, they grow into the type of person God is shaping them to be and live the type of lifestyle that pleases Him. As we grow to be like Jesus, we increase our spiritual strength. Individuals who learn from the Bible come to understand it and intentionally live out its principles in their lives; they move from being a spiritual baby to being a spiritual adult, which provides them many spiritual benefits.
- F. Lastly, the Word of God provides protection through God and is a reliable guide (Pr. 30:5). Spiritual protection is provided by God for those who trust His Word. Those who know that the Word of God is reliable through their own personal experience will be protected from many

spiritual dangers by living in the wisdom God provides through His Word. Destructive paths can be altogether avoided through the wise direction of the Bible.

IV. How to Take the Word of God

- A. Now that we know what the Word of God is and the advantages that it provides to those who commit themselves to following Jesus's way of life, how do we practically pursue these benefits. Jesus made it clear that the word of God is just as necessary for life as is food (Mt. 4:4). Here are a few of the first steps we can take.
- B. Every person begins their connection to the Word of God by reading it on a regular basis. While this appears simple, it can be a challenge, especially when starting out. The Bible is a book written in languages we don't understand, in cultures that are unfamiliar to us, and the events occur in a historical timeline that we don't know. There are many challenges that will need to be overcome in order to more adequately understand the Bible as we read it. While it is a process to learn how to read the Bible well, it is still important to read the Bible regularly and stick with it, even when it becomes difficult. The more we learn about the Bible, the more we will get out of our reading of it. Do not get discouraged!
- C. As we begin spending time in God's Word and read it for ourselves, there are a few resources that can make this journey a little easier. I highly recommend that every disciple get their own copy of Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart's book *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. This book is like having a person who knows the Bible sitting next to you, guiding you through the Word of God as you read it. Read this book first on the section that explains the portion of the Bible you are currently reading, then read the Bible. If you use this book first and then read the Bible, you will get much more out of your Bible reading than you would by just reading the Bible. I wish I knew about this resource when I was first started to read the Bible.
- D. Another helpful tool is having a study Bible rather than just the Biblical text. Study Bibles contain book introductions for each book of the Bible. These introductions will tell you who wrote the part of the Bible you are reading, when they wrote it, to whom they wrote, and the historical setting in which each book of the Bible was written. This basic background information will help make sense of what is written in the Bible. Study Bibles also have study notes throughout the Bible, which is another valuable tool that will aid us as we read the Bible. These notes will explain confusing or misunderstood verses or textual items that come up throughout the Bible. You will want to get a study Bible based on the translation of the Bible you like to read. I highly recommend the NASB *The New Inductive Study Bible* (for note taking and your own study of the Bible) or the *ESV Study Bible*, along with the *NIV Study Bible* (which I used throughout college). You can also get study Bible's based on your own personal interests such as *The Apologetics Study Bible*, *The Archaeological Study Bible*, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, *The Life Application Study Bible*, *Jesus Centered Bible*, and the *Disciples' Study Bible*. Whatever particular interest you have, there is probably a study Bible focused on that topic.
- E. While reading the Bible is good and should be a regular habit of every disciple throughout their Christian life, it is also important to do more than merely reading the Bible. The Bible should also be studied. Studying the Bible is different than reading the Bible. Bible studying helps us take a closer more careful look at what the Bible teaches. Understanding the Bible will require a

- balanced approach that both reads and studies the Bible. Bible study requires the development of certain skills and specific study techniques that assist us in observing, interpreting, and applying the Bible to our lives. Studying the Bible will take us much farther than only reading it.
- F. Once again, there are helpful resources that can be used to teach us how to study the Bible. I spent years of my Christian life reading the Bible, getting frustrated, confused, and not getting much out of what I was reading. Once I was taught how to study the Bible, I suddenly had tools to use to help me understand what I was reading. When I started to combine Bible reading with Bible study, my excitement and passion for the Word of God greatly increased. I highly recommend two resources for every person when it comes to learning how to study the Bible. Apart from the Bible itself, the resource that changed my life in the most drastic way was Howard and William Hendricks's book *Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible*. This book taught me how to read and study the Bible more effectively. If you can only get one book on Bible reading and study, this is it. After gaining the basic knowledge and skills contained in this book, I was able to go directly to the Bible, by myself, and learn from it as I cared for my own soul.
- G. Once these basic skills are mastered, they can be used in various ways. Different Bible study methods are presented in Rick Warren's book, *Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods: Twelve Ways You Can Unlock God's Word*. While these Bible study strategies were not invented by Rick Warren, his book does a nice job summarizing and presents helpful methods of Bible study. I use these Bible study methods regularly in my sermon and teaching preparations. If a disciple reads these books and develops the skills presented in them, they will be able to effectively study the Bible in accurate ways that nourish their souls. In my view, these are two of the most important resources any disciple can have.
- H. The third and final recommendation for an action step that will help disciples take the Word of God as a spiritual weapon is learning how to meditate on the Bible. Disciples are commanded to set their minds on the things above (Col. 3:2). As we center our thinking around the truth of God's Word and focus our mental energy on it, we will become spiritually strong. The more a person turns their attention to the Word of God, the better off they are going to be spiritually. Biblically faithful living comes from Biblically faithful thinking. While this spiritual discipline is largely unfamiliar to the church today, it is frequently recommended throughout the pages of Scripture. Meditating on the Bible should be the disciple's' constant practice (Ps. 1:2, Josh. 1:8, Dt. 11:18).
- I. A resource to help you develop an understanding of how Bible focused meditation works and how to practice it is David Saxson's book, *God's Battle Plan for the Mind: The Puritan Practice of Biblical Meditation*. This book explains what meditation is according to God's Word and provides plenty of practical help in how to engage in it. The intent of this book is to help disciples develop their own personal habit of Biblical meditation.
- J. If every disciple mastered the content and skills of this book, along with the previously mentioned ones, they would consistently grow and become spiritually healthy. Lives will be transformed when disciples learn how to read and study the Bible along with shaping their thinking around it. Even if other spiritual habits are neglected (which is not recommended), a

person will grow toward Jesus’s likeness. It is my strong personal conviction that the most important habits of the Christian life are Bible reading/study and Bible focused meditation. These are the most important spiritual disciplines any Christian can learn and practice.

V. Conclusion

- A. The Word of God is one of the primary resources God gives to us for our own good. God has chosen to communicate with us through His written Word. People knowing and living by the Bible is clearly a high priority for God. In fact, Jesus said this is what we are going to be judged on (Jn. 12:48).
- B. Neglecting the Bible, no matter the reason, is not an option for those who love God. True disciples continuously stay connected to the Word of God, “³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,’” (Jn. 8:31). As a result of this, they will be freed by Jesus from the destructive desires of their hearts. Spiritual strength is offered through the Word of God.

VI. Questions for Further Thought

- A. Have you tried reading the Bible on your own? What has your experience been like?
- B. Jesus thought the Bible was as important to life as eating (Mt. 4:4). Why do you think He says this?
- C. Do you have any doubts or questions about the Bible being the Word of God? What are they?
- D. What are some of the challenges you face that get in the way of you spending time in the Word of God and understanding what it says?
- E. How might you be able to increase your knowledge, understanding, and application of the Word of God to your life?